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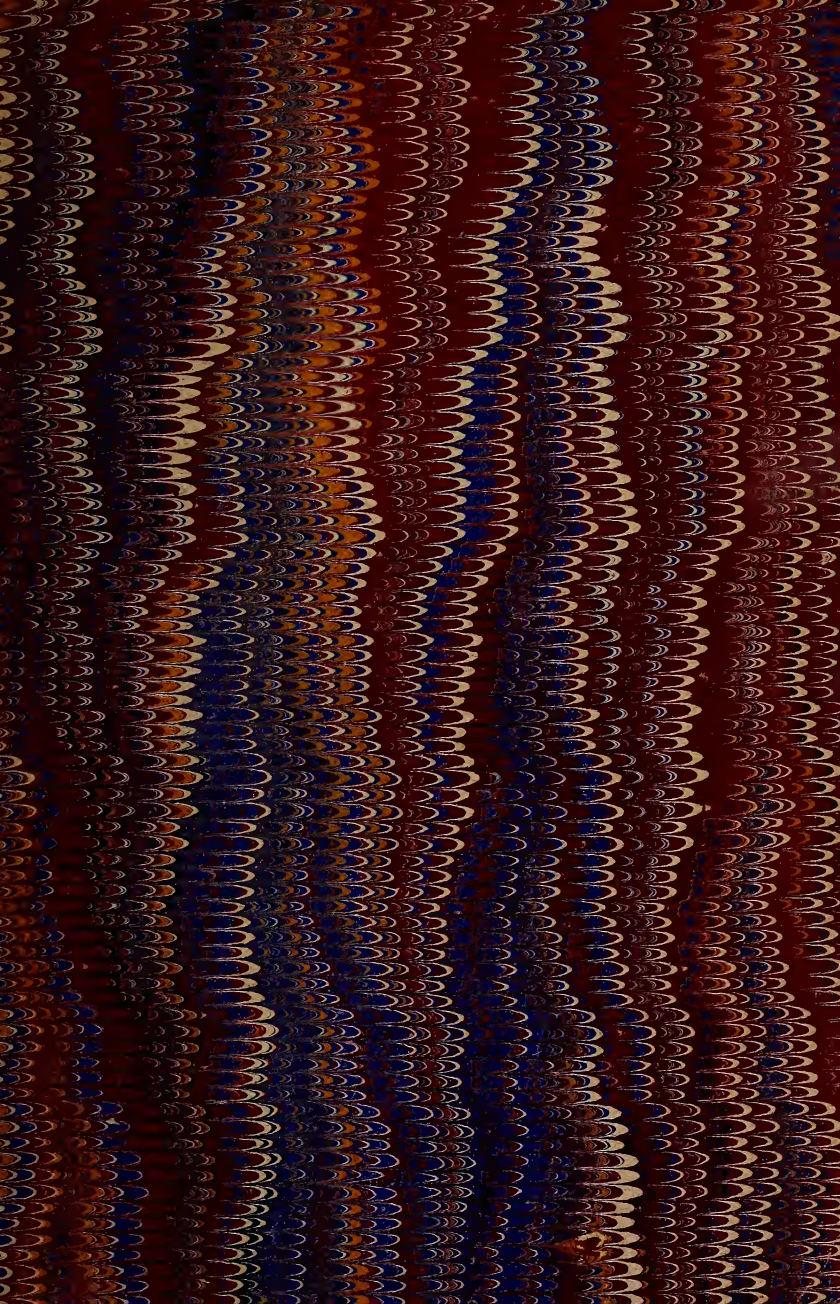
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# Irving Tales.

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NEW YORK:  
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1885.

1. 2

## SIR JOCELYN'S CAP.

### I

"THIS," said Jocelyn, throwing himself into a chair, "is the most wonderful thing I ever came across."

Do you know how, sometimes in the dead of night, or even in broad daylight, while you are thinking, you distinctly hear a voice which argues with you, puts the case another way, contradicts you, or even accuses you and calls names?

This happened to Jocelyn. A voice somewhere in the room, and not far from his ear, said clearly and distinctly, "There is something here much more wonderful." It was a low voice, yet metallic, and with a cluck in it as if the owner had begun life as a Hottentot.

Jocelyn started and looked around. He was quite alone. He was in chambers in Piccadilly: a suit of four rooms; outside there was the roll of carriages and cabs, with the tramping of many feet; at five o'clock in an afternoon in May, and in Piccadilly, one hardly expects anything supernatural. When something of the kind happens at this time, it is much more creepy than the same thing at midnight. The voice was perfectly distinct and audible. Jocelyn felt cold and trembled involuntarily, and then was angry with himself for trembling.

"Much more wonderful," repeated this strange voice with the cluck. Jocelyn pretended not to hear it. He was quite as brave as most of his brother clerks in the Foreign Office, but in the matter of strange voices he was inexperienced, and thought to get rid of this one as one gets rid of an importunate beggar, by passing him without notice.

"I've looked everywhere," he said.

"Not everywhere," clucked the voice in correction.

"Everywhere," he repeated, firmly. "And there's nothing. The old man has left no money, no bank books, no sign of investment, stocks, or shares. What did he live upon?"

"Me," said the voice.

Jocelyn started again. His nerves, he said to himself, must be getting shaky.

"He seems to have had no 'affairs' of any kind; no solicit-



ors, no engagements; nothing but the letting of the Grange. How on earth did he——” Here he stopped, for fear of being answered by that extraordinary echo in his ear. He heard a cluck-cluck as if the reply was ready, but was checked at the moment of utterance.

“All his bills paid regularly, nothing owing, not even a tailor’s bill running, and the money in his desk exactly the amount and no more required for his funeral. Fancy leaving just enough for your funeral! Seems like a practical joke on your lawful heir. Nothing in the world except that old barn.” He sat down again and meditated.

The deceased was his uncle, the chief of the old house, the owner and possessor of the Grange. He left, it is true, a formal will behind him, in which he devised everything of which he was possessed to his nephew Jocelyn, who inherited the Grange and the park besides the title. Unfortunately, he did not specify his possessions, so that when the young man came to look into his inheritance, he knew not how great or how small it was. Now, when one knows nothing, one expects a great deal, which accounts for the buoyancy of human youth and the high spirits of the infant pig.

He began with an unsystematic yet anxious examination of the old man’s desks and papers. They were left in very good order; the letters, none of which were of the least importance, were all folded, endorsed, and dated; the receipts—all for bills which would never be disputed—were pasted in books; the diaries, which contained the record of daily expenditure and the chronicle of small beer, stood before him in a long uniform row of black cloth volumes. Even the dinner cards were preserved, and the play-bills: a most methodical old gentleman. But this made it the more surprising that there could not be found among all these papers any which referred to his private affairs and his personal property.

“He must have placed,” said Jocelyn, “all the documents concerning his invested moneys in the hands of some solicitor. I have only got to find his address.”

He then proceeded to examine slowly and methodically the drawers, shelves, cupboards, recesses, cabinets, boxes, cases, receptacles, trunks and portmanteaus in the chambers, turning them inside out and upside down, shaking them, banging them, peering and prying, carefully feeling the linings, lifting lids, sounding pockets, and trying locks, until he was quite satisfied that he had left no place untried. Yet he found noth-

ing. This was surprising as well as disappointing. For although of late years old Sir Jocelyn's habits had been retired and even penurious, it was well known that in early manhood, that is to say, somewhere in the twenties and the thirties he was about town in a very large and generous sense indeed. He must, at that time, have had a great deal of money. Had he lost it? Yet something must have remained. Else, how could he live. And at least there must be some record of the remnant. Yet, strange to say, not even a bank book. Jocelyn thought this over day by day. He had taken up his abode in the chambers, which were comfortable, though the furniture was old and shabby. The rent, which was high, was paid by the Grange, now let to a family of Americans of the same name, who wanted to say that they had lived in an old English country house, and would go home and declare that it was the real original cradle of their race. Cradles of race, like family trees, can be ordered or hired of the cabinet maker, either in Wardour Street or the College of Herald's. The old man *must* have had something besides the family house. If it was only an annuity, there would be the papers to show it. Where were those papers?

This search among the drawers and shelves and desks took him several days. It was upon the second day that he heard the voice. On the fifth day, which was Saturday, he began with the books on the shelves—there were not many. First he looked behind them: nothing there; he remembered to have heard that sometimes wills, deeds, and other proofs of property have been hidden in the leaves of the Family Bible: there was no Family Bible, but there was a great quantity of novels, and Jocelyn spent a long afternoon turning over the leaves of these volumes in search of some paper which would give him a clue to his inheritance. He might just as well have spent it squaring the circle, or extracting the square root of minus one, or pursuing a metaphysical research, for all the good it did him. It is only fair to the young man that he would have greatly preferred spending the time in lawn-tennis, and especially in playing the game at a place which was adorned with the gracious presence of a certain young lady. "A Foreign Office clerk," said Jocelyn, bitterly, "a mere Foreign Office clerk is good enough to dance with. She has danced with me for a year and a half. The other fellow can't dance. But when that clerk becomes the owner of a tumble-down Grange, though there are not twenty acres of

ground belonging to it, and, besides, gets all the property of old Sir Jocelyn, whom all the world knows, and inherits his title, that Foreign Office clerk becomes, if you please, a person of consideration, as the other fellows shall see. But where the devil *is* the property?"

"Property!" It was the same curious echo, in his ear, of that metallic clucking voice. Remember that it was Saturday afternoon when the streets are full; this made such a phenomenon as a voice proceeding from empty space all the more striking and terrible. Much more terrible was the thing which next occurred. You know how in thought reading the medium takes your hand, and without your guidance moves slowly, but certainly, in the direction of the spot where you have hidden the ring. The phenomenon has been witnessed by hundreds: it is a fact which cannot be disputed. What happened to Jocelyn was exactly of the same kind, and therefore not more surprising. An invisible force—call it not a hand—an invisible, impalpable, strange electrical force seized his hand with a kind of grasp. It was not a strong grasp: quite the contrary. The pressure was varying, flickering, inconstant, uncertain. At the very first manifestation and perception of it, Sir Jocelyn's knees knocked themselves together, his hair stood on end, his moustache went out of curl, and, to use a favorite and very feeling expression of the last century, his jaw stuck. By this feeble pressure or hand-grasp, the young man was pulled, or rather guided gently across the room to a table on which stood, with its doors open, a large Japanese cabinet. It was one of the things with two doors, behind which are two rows of drawers, and below the doors one large drawer. He had already examined every one of the drawers on the first day of the search, when he had opened and looked into all the desks, drawers, boxes, and cupboards in the chambers. He knew what was in the drawers—a collection of letters, chiefly from ladies, written to his uncle and preserved by him. Was it possible that he had overlooked something? He opened all the drawers, turned out their contents, and proceeded to examine every letter. This took him two or three hours, during the whole of which time he had an uncomfortable feeling as if his forefinger was being gently but steadily pulled. At last he threw down the last letter and allowed himself, just like a man who is blindfolded and yet finds a hidden object, allows himself to be led by the unconscious guide straight to the place where it has been deposited.



Guided by this unknown force, he found himself grasping the lowest drawer—the large one—which he had already pulled out. What did it mean? He turned it round: there was nothing remarkable about the drawer: an empty drawer cannot contain a secret. Surprising: his fingers seemed pulled about in all directions—what was it? By this time, the first natural terror was gone, but his pulse beat fast; he was excited; he was clearly on the eve of making some strange discovery.

He examined the drawer again, and more carefully. He could see nothing strange about it. Then he heard that curious voice again which seemed in his own head, and said “Measure.”

What was he to measure? If Jocelyn had been a conjuror he would have understood at once: he would even have guessed: the professor of legerdemain is a master in all kinds of craft and subtlety—I knew one of them who, though passionately fond of whist, would never play the game on account of the temptation in dealing to give himself all the thirteen trumps—but above all he understood the value of drawers, compartments, divisions, and recesses which are shorter than they seem. The drawer was in fact only three-fourths the depth of the cabinet. When Jocelyn at length realized this fact, he perceived that there must be a secret compartment at the back, where no doubt something was hidden which it greatly concerned him to find out. Of course by this time he accepted without further doubt the fact that unusual forces—call them forces—were abroad. “A psychic influence,” said Jocelyn, though his teeth chattered, “of a rare and most curious description.” The communication of it to the Society established as a Refuge for the stories which nobody outside it will believe, would be very interesting: but perhaps it was his uncle who thus—here another impatient jerk of his finger startled him. He turned the cabinet round; the back presented a plain surface of wood without any possible scope for the operation of secret springs; the side was carved with little round knobs in relief. He measured the drawer with the side of the cabinet: there was a difference of three and a half inches, and the drawer was three inches high: as the cabinet was two feet broad, this gave a space of  $3 \times 24 \times 3 \frac{1}{2}$ , which represents 252 cubic inches. A good deal may be hidden away in 252 cubic inches. How was he to get at the contents? Any one can take a hammer and chisel and brutally burst open a cabinet, whether of Japanese or any other work. It did

strike Jocelyn that perhaps with the poker he might prise the thing open. But then, so beautiful a cabinet, and his late uncle's favorite depository for the love-letters of a life spent wholly in making love—'twould be barbarous. While he considered, the fore-finger of his right hand was traveling slowly over the knobs. Presently it stopped, and Jocelyn felt upon the knuckle a distinct tap. He pressed the knob: to his astonishment a kind of door flew open. Jocelyn looked in—there *was* something! At this moment he paused. He did not doubt that the treasure, whatever it was, would prove of the greatest, the very greatest importance to him, perhaps title-deeds, perhaps debentures, perhaps notes or investments, perhaps the address of the solicitors in whose hands Sir Jocelyn, his uncle, had placed his affairs, perhaps—but here he tilted up the cabinet, not daring through some terror of the supernatural, as if a spirit who could bite might be lurking in the recess, to put in his hand, and the contents fell out without any apparent supernatural assistance, by the natural law of gravity. We may take it as a general rule in all occurrences of the supernatural kind, that the ordinary machinery provided by nature and already explained by Sir Isaac Newton and others, is employed wherever it is possible. In cases where direct interference of another kind is required, no doubt it is always forthcoming. No ghost or spirit would hesitate, of course, to go through closed doors, pass parcels through walls, and so forth; but if the doors are open the plain way is clearly and obviously the easiest and best. So that, if a thing will fall from a receptacle of its own accord when that receptacle is inverted, there is really no necessity at all for the assistance of psychic force. This explains why the parcel fell out.

It was wrapped in an old discolored linen covering. Jocelyn unfolded it with trembling fingers. It contained a cap. Odd; only a cap. It was made of cloth, thick, such as is used for a fez, and formerly no doubt red, but the color was almost gone out of it, and it was moth-eaten. In shape it was not unlike a Phrygian cap. Round the lower part there ran an edging, an inch broad, of gold embroidery, but this too was ragged and, in places, falling off. There was also a lining of silk, but it was so ragged and worn that it looked as if at a single touch it would fall out.

"A worn-out, old decrepit cap," said Jocelyn. "All this fuss about a worthless cap!"

Just then his little finger received a tap ; and Jocelyn, his attention thus directed to the spot, saw a folded paper beneath the cap.

"Ah!" he cried, "this is what I have been looking for. But a cap! I never heard my uncle talk about a cap."

He took up the paper, and yet he could not choose but look at the cap itself. As he gazed upon it, he felt himself turning giddy. Cabinet, cap, and paper swam before his eyes. "It is nothing," he murmured, "the heat of the room—the—the——"

"Effendi!" said the voice he knew, metallic and yet quavering. "Excellency! It is—*me*—your servant."

The cap was transformed—it was now of a brilliant hue, while its gold embroideries were fresh and glittering—it no longer lay upon a table, decrepit and falling to pieces, but it now covered the head of a little old man, apparently about eighty or more, so wrinkled and lined was his visage. He seemed feeble, and his knees and shoulders were bent, but his eyes were bright. He was dressed in some Oriental garb, the like of which Jocelyn had never seen.

He bowed, in Oriental style with gesture of the fingers. "I am," he said, "the Slave of the Cap. I am a Jinn, and I am at his Excellency's service, night and day, to perform his wishes so long as he possesses the Cap."

"And at what price?" asked Jocelyn.

"At none. The Effendi's ancestor paid the charges: fees are not allowed to be taken by assistants. Sorcerers and great Effendis like his Excellency, are particularly requested to observe this rule."

"Certainly," said Jocelyn. "If there is to be no signing of bonds and term of years——"

"Nothing, your Excellency, nothing of the kind."

"In that case——" here the faintness came over him again and his eyes swam. When he recovered he looked about him for his Oriental servant. There was no one there, only the furniture in the room and the cabinet, and beside the cabinet the worn and faded cap.

"I think I must be going off my head," said Jocelyn. "I wish I had a glass of water." As he spoke he saw that a glass of water actually stood on the table at his elbow. He took it and was going to drink it. "Faugh!" he cried, setting it down hastily, "it has had flowers in it."

Then he remembered the roll of paper—which he opened.



It was a letter on two sheets addressed to himself by his uncle, but the second sheet had been twisted, and apparently used as a light, for it was partly burned and had been rolled out again and placed with the unburned sheet as if the writer had been hurried.

"My dear nephew," it said, "I have deferred until a late—perhaps the last moment, writing to you. I have long felt that you are ardently desirous of ascertaining what I have and what I should leave to you. In the first place, there is the Grange. You can always, I should think, let that very old and picturesque building for a sum which will give you the rent of your chambers, pay your club subscriptions and your dinners. You have, besides, your clerkship, which ought to pay your tailor's bill. I do not advise you as regards the conduct of your life. My own, it is true, has been chiefly guided by the precepts of the great and good Lord Chesterfield; but I refrain from pressing my example upon you.

"There is, however, a very curious family possession which I am able to leave you. I am sure you will value it highly, if only on account of its history. It has been in the possession of the chief of our race for five hundred and fifty years and more. Sir Jocelyn de Haultegresse, your ancestor, being one of the later Crusaders, under Richard Cœur de Lion, received it for some friendly services, the nature of which is unknown, from his noble and learned friend, the Saracen Sorcerer, Ali Ibn Yûssûf, commonly called Khanjar ed Dîn, or the Ox Goad of Religion. This invaluable cap confers on its possessor the power of having whatever he wishes for. Armed with this talisman, and being all, like myself, men of moderate ambitions, anxious chiefly to get through life as pleasantly as possible, we have not incurred odium by amassing broad lands and great possessions. I bequeath, therefore, to you this cap, in the hope that you will use it with moderation. Ponder carefully before expressing a desire, even in your own mind, the effect of making a wish which will be construed into an order. I must also give you a word of warning. I have observed for some time, to my great regret"—here the page was partly and irregularly burned—"to my very great regret . . . on many occasions to carry out my wishes promptly . . . desirable to exercise modera . . . no excuse for other than prompt . . . not fall to pieces, or there may be alleged some pretext for crying off . . . ments have long been lost, and it might be difficult in court of law to remove . . . Well, my nephew, this talisman kept me in luxury for sixty years; perhaps it may yet . . . recover, so to speak, its old tone. At least I hope so. Your affect. . . ."

"By Jove!" said Jocelyn.

He might have gone on to ask if anybody had ever seen the like, or if one could have expected it, or if one was really living in an age when such things are discredited. But he did not. He only said, "By Jove!" and looked about the room, and at the cap, and at the letter, with bewildered eyes. At last he understood the meaning of this very plain letter. He pushed back his chair and sprang to his feet, crying, "Christopher Columbus! I've got a WISHING CAP!"

## II.

HE stood looking at the faded old cap; the thing fascinated him; the gold embroidery flickered, and seemed to send out sparks and tiny gleams of fire: the rusty stuff glowed and became ruddy again: *could* the thing be true? But his uncle was a sober man and a truthful: his narrative had nothing wild or enthusiastic about it.

"My ancestor, Sir Jocelyn de Haultegresse," the young man repeated. "Yes: the one who lies with crossed legs in the old church. I wish I knew how he got the cap."

His eyes fell upon a picture. Why, he had seen that picture a hundred times, and never thought what it might mean, or if it had any meaning at all. It hung, among others, on the wall, and represented a Crusader in full armor, conversing with a Moslem. The former was a young man; the latter was old, with a long grey beard, an old man who looked impossibly wise.

They were not only conversing, but Jocelyn heard what they were saying.

"I understand, Venerable Ox Goad of Religion," said the Christian, "that with this thing in my possession I can ask for and obtain anything I want."

"Anything in reason," replied Khanjar ed Dîn. "You cannot, for instance, walk dry-shod from Palestine to Dover, but you can sail in safety through a storm."

"And not be sea-sick?"

"Certainly not, if you command it."

"Suppose, for instance—a valiant knight would not ask such a thing—but suppose, for illustration, one were to ask for—say the absence of the enemy when one lands, eh?—terror of the enemy at one's approach—flight of the enemy when one charges—safety when the arrows are rattling about one's armor—eh?"

"All these things," replied the wise man, "you can command and ensure."

"Ha!" Sir Jocelyn smiled. "It rejoices me," he said piously, "that I came a crusading. All Christendom—ay! and Islam too—shall ring with my prowess."

"Certainly," replied the Sage, "if you wish it."

"Can one also command the constancy of one's mistress?"

The magician hesitated.

"You can command it," he said. "But I know not the



Frankish ladies. Perhaps they will not obey even the Slave of the Cap."

"One more question," said Sir Jocelyn. "In my country they have a trick of burning those—even if they be knights, crusaders, and pious pilgrims—burning and roasting, I say, at slow fires those who become magicians, wizards, sorcerers, and those who employ the services of a devil."

"Keep your secret," said the wizard. "Let no one know. And, that none may guess it, let your desires be moderate. Farewell, Sir Jocelyn."

The conversation ceased, but the picture remained. Pictures, in fact, last longer than conversations.

"This is truly wonderful," said Jocelyn.

He threw open the windows and looked into the street. Below him, in Piccadilly, was the crowd of the early London season: the carriages and cabs rolled along the road; on the other side the trees were in their early foliage. It seemed impossible, in the very heart and centre of modern civilization and luxury, that such things as he had heard and witnessed should have happened. Yet, when he looked around the room again, there was the Cap, there was his uncle's letter, and there the picture of Sir Jocelyn's bargain. What had he given this Eastern wizard for a power so tremendous?

Then the young man began to reflect upon the history of his House. They had for generations lived in the ease and affluence of English country gentleness: they had never, so far as he knew, turned out a spendthrift: they had not fooled away their small estate: they had neither distinguished nor disgraced themselves: in fact, there was no reason why they should try to distinguish themselves: they had all they wanted, because they could command it. Knowledge? they had the royal road to it: art—skill—strength—they had only to wish for it. Wealth? they could command it. Why, then, should they seek to show themselves better, cleverer, stronger, or wiser than their fellows? It would have cost an infinity of trouble, and for no good end, because if they succeeded how much better off would they have been? The knowledge of this secret made him understand his ancestors. As they had been, so should he be. Except for one thing. The four last baronets were unmarried; in each case the title descended to a nephew; as for himself—and here he murmured softly, "Eleanor"—and choked. Suppose you had set your heart wholly upon one thing: and that thing seemed impossible of attain-

ment, so that the future loomed before you as dull and as grey as noontide at a foggy Christmas: and then suppose the clouds lifted, the sun shining, and that glorious, that beautiful Thing actually within your grasp. Any one, under these circumstances, would choke.

He returned to the table and contemplated the cap, wondering if the Attendant of the Cap were actually at his elbow.

"It might be awkward," he said, "to wake at night and remember that the dev—I mean Monsieur the Jinn, the Minister of the Cap, was sitting beside one on the pillow. Would he come to church with one, I wonder? And would he be offended with remarks about him?" He half expected some reply, but there was none.

"He was a very old fellow to look at," he went on. "But in these cases age goes for nothing. I suppose he doesn't know, himself, how old he is—as for the Cap, I wish it were a trifle less shabby."

Wonderful to relate, a curious change came over the faded cloth: it looked bright again: and the gold embroidery smartened up; not to look fresh, but a good many years younger.

"Sun came out," said Sir Jocelyn, trying not to be too credulous. Then he thought he would test the powers of the Cap, as mathematicians test a theory, namely, with elementary cases. "I wish," he said, "that my hat was new." Why, as he looked at his hat it suddenly struck him that it was not so very shabby after all: a mirror-like polish has a got-up look about it: this hat was one which had evidently been worn for a week or two, but was still quite good enough to be worn in the Park or anywhere.

"My gloves"—he stopped because, without formulating the wish in words, he instantly became aware that his gloves were by no means so bad as they seemed a moment before. Not new certainly: but what is so horrid as a pair of brand-new gloves? He had overrated the faults of his gloves: they were an excellent pair of gloves, just worn long enough to make them fit the fingers and not make them look like glove-stretchers: the glove should look made for the fingers, in fact, not the fingers for the glove. To be sure the gloves on the table were not those he had in his mind; and, in fact, he could not remember exactly how he came by those gloves. Later on, he discovered that he had taken the wrong pair at the Club.

He sat down to argue out this matter in his own mind. All young men try to do this: when they come to realize that "ar-

guing out" leads to hopeless fogging, they give it up. Very few middle-aged men argue out a thing; mathematicians, sometimes; logicians, never: the intellectual ladies who contribute arguments on the intellect of the domestic cat to the *Spectator*, frequently. But the result is always more fog.

A Wishing Cap, at this enlightened period, is absurd.

But tables turn, furniture dances, men are "levitated," thought is read, and there is a Psychological Society, with Fellows of Trinity and Doctors of Letters at the head of it. Nothing, at any time, is absurd.

What evidence had he for the miraculous powers of the Cap?

First, the word of his uncle, a most truthful and honorable gentleman. Next, the picture. Thirdly, the two remarkable Visions he had himself received. Fourthly, the gloves and the hat. Lastly, any further evidence the Cap itself might afford him.

By this time he was hopelessly fogged. He began to remember Will, Magnetic Force, Psychic fluid, and all the tags of the spiritualistic folk. These phrases are like spectres which come with fog and mist.

Sir Jocelyn was then sensible enough to perceive that he had argued the matter thoroughly out. After all, there is nothing like experiment, especially, as the conjurors say, under "test conditions," that is to say, where collusion, connivance, fraud, and deception of any kind are impossible. I have seen at a fair, under "test conditions," a plum-cake made in a gentleman's hat, and the hat none the worse.

He lit a cigarette and tried to think of other things unconnected with a Wishing Cap. And first he reflected that, although it is bad to be a penniless Foreign Office clerk, with no other recommendation than that of being heir to a Baronet reputed wealthy, it is worse to have succeeded to the title and to have discovered that there is no money after all. "Hang it!" cried Jocelyn, "there might have been something. I do wish my uncle had left me something—even a single sixpence!" As he spoke a small coin, a sixpence in fact, tumbled out of a forgotten hole in his waistcoat pocket and fell clinking on the floor. At this point Jocelyn gave way to temper. "Damn the waistcoat!" he cried, and at the same moment dropped his cigarette and burnt an irreclaimable hole in the light stuff of which the waistcoat was made.

Then he conceived a strange idea, a kind of trap to catch a



demon, or at least to prove him. He leaned his elbows on the table and addressed the Cap.

"You are a poor old moth-eaten thing," he said. "That, so far as I know, you may have been when the Ox Goad of Religion gave you to my ancestor, Sir Jocelyn the Valiant. Now, you give me a test of your powers in a simple and unmistakable way. I am tired of the uniform London dinner. Cause me to have an entirely new dinner. There!" He expected some movement on the part of the Cap; a nod or inclination at least. Nothing of the kind. The Cap remained perfectly still.

"A note for you, sir," said the servant, bringing him a letter.

It was from a man named Annesley, a friend of Jocelyn's, who had rooms in Sackville Street.

"If by any lucky chance," it said, "you are disengaged this evening, come here. The experiment in *menus* we have talked of comes off to-night. Courtland has been called away, so we must have it now or perhaps never."

Yes: there had been talk about variety in *menus*. Annesley, a man of invention and ideas, had promised something, vaguely. Well, he would go: he answered the note to that effect.

"I suppose," he said to the Cap, "that you have got something to do with this. I wished for a new kind of dinner, and here is one: on the other hand, Annesley hasn't got a Cap, and I suppose he arranged his *menu* without reference to you. I will now give you another chance. I am going into the Park. I wish to meet the Stauntons. Do you know who the Stauntons are? Find out! Yah! You and your sixpence!"

In spite of his bluster, he was rapidly acquiring confidence in his Cap. Before going out, he carefully placed it, with his uncle's letter, in the secret drawer, which he closed. Then he looked at the picture of his ancestor and the Syrian magician.

"Venerable Ox Goad of Religion!" he said, imitating his great ancestor, "can I command, in truth, all that I desire?"

It seemed as if a voice spoke in answer, but whose voice, or whence it came, he knew not.

"Command!"

Jocelyn heard it and shuddered. Then he took his hat and gloves, and hurried forth.

## III.

WHEN Jocelyn wished to meet the Stauntons, he should have explained that he wished to meet Nelly, or Eleanor, Staunton. This might have saved him a good deal of annoyance. For, first there were Connie Staunton, the actress, and her sister Linda, both of the Gaiety. He met them, driving in a victoria, and heard two young gentlemen, as they lifted their hats, murmur their names in accents of idolatrous emotion. "You are a fool," said Jocelyn, addressing the Cap. Then there came rolling along a great yellow chariot, with an old lady and still older gentleman in it. "That," said one of two girls who were standing beside the railing, "that is Lady Staunton and Sir George—our Hemmer is her lady's maid. She's a kind old thing.

"This is ridiculous," said Jocelyn. Yet he was pleased to observe the activity of his new servant. Two sets of Stauntons already, though not yet the right set. "I mean the Howard Stauntons."

It was before him, slowly advancing with the throng. He could see the backs of two heads and the parasol of a third. Mrs. Staunton and Caroline and—yes—Nelly! Hers was the parasol. He would walk on and meet them when they turned.

He was conscious that he was regarded with no great favor by the young lady's mamma. Still, he was now a Baronet, with a place in the country, and an income, counting his clerkship, of—well, was it quite six hundred pounds a year? There was also the Cap, but of that he could say nothing. Yet oh! the joy of wishing beautiful dresses for Nelly, when Nelly should be his own!

There were two daughters: Caroline, the elder, was now seven-and-twenty years of age, and in her ninth season. As she was beautiful, accomplished, clever, and rich (by reason of a bequest from a rich uncle), it was to all women a most surprising thing that she did not marry. Men, who understand these things better, were not surprised. Her beauty was after the fine old Roman style, and accompanied by a more than classical coldness. She was an advocate of woman's rights, an ardent politician, a student of logic, learned in many ways, but she was not, apparently, a devotee of Venus. That goddess loves her worshippers to be soft-eyed, smiling, caressing, lively, willing to be pleased and anxious to please. Caroline



was chiefly anxious to be heard. There was also some talk about an early affair which ended badly. Some girls harden after such a disaster. Still, there was no doubt that Caroline desired to convert men into listeners. Of the opposite school was Nelly, younger than her sister by seven good solid years. Not so beautiful—in fact, with irregular features—she was singularly taking by reason, principally, of her sympathetic nature. She had no opinions at all of her own, but she was, on the other hand, very ready to hear those of other people, especially those of young men. That woman is certain to go far who thoroughly understands that young men—indeed, men of all ages—delight in nothing so much as to talk confidentially with women, and especially young women, about themselves. Many a most excellent chance has been lost through not observing and acting upon this principle. Nelly, her mother was resolved, should not be thrown away. As for Jocelyn, he had nothing, and she had nothing : therefore any little tenderness which might arise on the girl's side should be instantly nipped in the bud. A resolute mother, when assisted by an elder daughter, is altogether too powerful for a detrimental. Therefore Jocelyn got next to no chances, and worshipped at a distance and sadly. Whether Nelly ever understood the meaning of his melancholy I know not. Meantime, the young man lost no opportunity of meeting the object of his hopeless passion, though he too often fell into the hands of the elder sister, who made him sit down and hear her opinions. Now, however, he repeated, he was a Baronet, and he had—he had a Wishing Cap.

“I wish they would go slower,” he said. There was a block at Prince's Gate, and the whole line was stopped.

“Thank you,” said Jocelyn. In another moment he would have reached the carriage, when—oh !—he groaned deeply—as there met him the greatest bore of his acquaintance, a long-winded bore, a cheerful bore, a bore who laughs, a bore who tells very pointless stories, a bore at the sight of whom men fly, plead engagements, and for their sake break up clubs. This creature seized Jocelyn by the button, and told him how he had landed a good thing. And the block was removed and the carriages went on again. At last he broke away, keeping, still keeping the Stauntons in sight. But there was another diversion. This time it was a slight carriage accident, but as it happened to friends of his own he could not in common decency pass on without tendering his assistance. . Once more he

got away, and saw the Stauntons' carriage slowly making its way to the turning at Albert Gate. Then was his last chance; the crowd was thick, but he forced his way through, and was prepared with a ready smile just before the carriage turned homewards. In fact, he had already executed a beautiful bow before he perceived that the vehicle was empty. The ladies had got out without his seeing them. He turned, discomfited, and went home to dress for dinner.

While dressing, in a pretty bad temper, he began to "argue it out" again. Why, after all, he had got his wishes in the most remarkable manner. About the reality of his power there could be no doubt. He had wished for water: it was at his elbow: no doubt, if he had said drinking water, the Cap would not have brought water in which flowers had been standing for a week: he had wished for a new hat, and his hat suddenly blossomed into such glossiness as is acquired by a *coup de fer* at the hatter's: for new gloves, and his gloves became—not new certainly, but newish; he had foolishly wished that his uncle had left him the smallest coin, and there was a sixpence: he had wished for a new and original dinner, and there had come Annesley's invitation: he had wished to see the Stauntons, and he had seen them.

It was with a feeling of great elation that he went to the dinner. Anybody would feel elated at the acquisition of such a strange and wonderful power.

"You shall have," said Annesley, as if he had actually heard Jocelyn's wish, "you shall have something perfectly new and original for dinner. It is an experiment which will, I think, please you."

The table was laid with the exquisite attractiveness and skill which belonged to all of Annesley's entertainments. He was a young man who had ideas and a considerable fortune to carry them out with. Life is only really interesting when one has both ideas and a fortune. As for Courtland, he was a critic. Not a failure in art and letters, but a critic born; one of the men who are critics of everything, from a picture to bread and cheese, and from Château-Lafitte to bitter beer.

"I see," said Annesley, with a gratified smile, "I see, my dear fellow, that you are surprised at seeing oysters. It is not the season for oysters, certainly," yet there were six on each man's plate. "But these are Chinese sun-dried oysters. They came to me by a singular chance, in a state resembling shrivelled rags. You put them into salt water for an hour or

two, and then, as you observe, they turn out as plump and as fresh as natives. By the Chinese they are esteemed a great delicacy."

Jocelyn tasted one, though with misgiving. Probably he did not share the Chinese opinion of sun-dried oysters, for he turned pale, gasped, and hastily drank a glass of chablis. The other man, observing the effect of the sun-dried oysters upon Jocelyn, prudently abstained from tasting them at all, but began a stream of conversation, under cover of which the oysters got carried away, while Annesley's delight in his experiment prevented him from observing its failure. Indeed, he went on to talk with complacent assurance of the foolish prejudices with which many admirable forms of food are regarded.

"I shall proceed," he said, "to give you presently a remarkable illustration of this." Jocelyn shuddered. "Meantime here is a soup which I can highly recommend; it is a *purée* of cuttle-fish."

It really was an excellent soup could Jocelyn have rid himself of the horrible imagination of a *poulpe* flinging hideous gelatinous arms about from the middle of the plate, and fixing its suckers on the hand that grasped the spoon.

"The cuttle-fish," said Annesley, who, besides being a man of ideas, was also somewhat of a prig, "the cuttle-fish, which is the actual type of the legendary Kraken---though, by the way, the Kraken is not so very legendary, since the great Squid---"

"That will do, Annesley," said Courtland. "We know all about the Squid. Fellow wrote a book about him. Model at the Fisheries."

"The cuttle-fish," continued Annesley, "is a much malignant creature. Not more so, however, than the fish which Williams is now putting on the table---the dog-fish."

"Oh! I say!" cried Jocelyn.

"Dog-fish," said Courtland. "Beasts when alive. Take all your bait. Fishermen roll 'em up and scrub the gunwale with 'em. Think it will encourage the others."

"My pet fisherman," said Jocelyn, "used to do that till I begged him not to. He told me that some people eat them."

"Did he eat them himself?" asked Courtland.

"No, he did not."

"Cooked like this," interrupted Annesley, with a reassuring smile, "he would have eaten them with enthusiasm. They are stuffed with canned shrimps."



"Lead poisoning," Courtland murmured in his beard.

The two guests, however, struggled manfully with the dog-fish. With it, Annesley insisted, must be taken Catalan wine. Little was done with either. Nor was the next course, which consisted of iced potatoes with mulled Moselle, much more successful. It was one of Annesley's whims to find for each course its one peculiar drink: thus with the edible fungus he gave iced negus, and though he provided a sufficiency of dry champagne, he begged his guests so pathetically to try his fancies that they could not refuse. Long before the unnatural dinner came to an end, all three were excited by the mixture of drinks and the correspondingly small supply of food. By the time when the curried kingfishers---a rare and *recherché* dish---arrived, they were tired of talking about *cuisine*, and were arguing hotly, especially Courtland and Annesley, about things of which they knew nothing, as the proper method of riding a steeple-chase, a thing which none of them had ever tried, the locality of "Swells' Corner" at Eton---all three had been at Harrow---and so forth. At last, Jocelyn, weary of the babble, and perhaps more than a little cross with the terrible failure of the dinner, cried out, "Oh, don't let us wrangle in this way! I wish we had a little harmony!"

He had hardly spoken when a German band, brazen beyond all belief, broke out at the end of Sackville Street, and a piano-organ below their window.

"This is the work"---Jocelyn banged his fist upon the table---"of my ancestor's amazing fool of a devil!"

The others stopped and looked at him. They only half heard the words, but Jocelyn hastily fled.

Everything had gone wrong---the dinner more than anything else. A terrible thought struck him. Could his devil by any chance have gone stupid, or was he inattentive? And, if the latter, how to correct him? Suppose, for instance, Ariel had refused to obey Prospero, and his master had no spells to compel obedience! Now this seemed exactly Jocelyn's case. He sat down and took a cigar. "The dinner," he said, "was the most infernal mess ever set before a man. I've taken too much wine, and mixed it; and I've eaten next to nothing. To-morrow morning I shall have a very self-assertive head; and all through that fool of a Cap." He remembered, however, that he had as yet asked nothing serious of the Cap, and went to bed hopeful.

## IV.

PERHAPS the wine he had taken made Jocelyn sleep, in spite of the many and exciting adventures of the day, without thinking of the Cap, or being disturbed by the thought of the invisible servant who sat beside his pillow. In the morning, which happened to be Sunday, he did think of the Cap when he awoke, but with a sleepy comfortable satisfaction in having got what promised to be a good thing. It was eight o'clock. "Too early to get up," he said; "wish I could go to sleep again."

His eyes instantly closed. When he awoke again it was eleven, and he proceeded to get up. It would be wrong to say that he did not think about the Cap; in fact, his mind was brimful of it, but Jocelyn was not one of those who work themselves up to an agony point of nervousness because they cannot understand a thing. On the contrary, once having realized that the thing *was*---an unmistakable and undeniable fact---he was ready to accept it, a thing as difficult to understand as the law of attraction.

"Heigho!" he said, "I wish I was dressed."

He then perceived that he had already put on his socks, though he couldn't remember having done so. And, besides, you cannot tub in your socks, so he had to take them off again. He wished for nothing more while he was dressing except once, and that at a most unlucky moment. It was in the process of shaving. He was thinking of the battles round Suakim, and his young heart, like that of his crusading ancestor, glowed within him. "I wish," he said, with enthusiasm, "that I had a chance of shedding my blood for my country." He forgot that his razor was at that moment executing its functions upon his chin; there was an awful gash---and an interval of ten minutes for temper and court-plaster.

He then began to comprehend that, with an attendant ready to carry out every wish, it is as well not to wish for things that you do not want. But no one knows, save those who have had a similar experience, how many things are wished for, carelessly and without thought. Jocelyn had to learn the lesson of prudence by many more accidents.

When his landlady, for instance, brought him his breakfast, she began, being a garrulous old creature, to talk about old



Sir Jocelyn, and the flight of time and what she remembered, and presently mentioned, casually, that it was her birthday.

"Indeed!" said Jocelyn, with effusion, "then, Mrs. Watts, I wish you many happy returns of the day and all such anniversaries."

He accompanied the wish with a substantial gift, but was hardly prepared, when the good woman's daughter came up to clear away, to hear that it was also the anniversary of her wedding-day. In fact, in a short time the housekeeper's anniversaries rained, and all of them demanded recognition. Like the clerk who accounted for absence three times in one year by the funeral of his mother, so this good lady multiplied her own birthdays and those of her children as long as their announcement drew half-a-crown from her lodger. After breakfast Jocelyn prepared to sally forth. He could not find his umbrella. "Devil take the thing!" he cried impatiently. It is to the credit of the Cap that the umbrella has never since been found. Therefore the wish was granted, and the devil did take the umbrella. *Jocelyn says* that he must have left it at the Club, but he *knows* otherwise.

He knew the church where the Stauntons had sittings, and he proposed to meet them as they came out and to walk in the gardens with them, perhaps to have luncheon with them. Nelly would be there, he knew, in the sweetest of early summer costumes, an ethereal creature made up of smiles, bright eyes, flowers, and airy color. She would smile upon him, but then, hang it! she would smile upon another fellow just as sweetly. Would the time come, he thought, when she would promise to smile on no one but himself? Could one ever grow tired of her smiles? Caroline would be there, too, much more beautifully dressed, cold, superior, and ready to lecture. Fancy marrying Caroline! But as for Nelly—"Oh!" he sighed, thinking of his empty lockers, "I do wish I had some money!"

He instantly felt something hard in his pocket. It was a shabby old leather purse full of money. He took out the contents and counted the money. Three pounds, fourteen shillings, ninepence and a farthing in coppers. Jocelyn sat down, bewildered.

"It's the Cap!" he said. "I wished for money. The fool of a Cap brings me three pounds, fourteen shillings, and ninepence-farthing!" He threw the purse into the fire-place. "What can you do with three pounds, fourteen and nine

pence-farthing? It would not do much more than buy a bonnet for Nelly."

Yet, he remembered it *was* money. If he could get, any time he wished, just such a sum, he could get on. Almost mechanically he made a little calculation. Three pounds fourteen shillings and ninepence-farthing every half-hour, or say only ten times a day, comes to thirty-seven pounds, seven shillings and eightpence-halfpenny. That, multiplied by three hundred and sixty-five, comes to 13,477l. 8s. 10 1-2d. "It is," said Jocelyn, "a very respectable income."

He hesitated, being in fact a little afraid of testing his new power. Then he said, boldly, "I want more money."

There was a click among the coins on the table. Jocelyn counted them again. He found another sixpence and a halfpenny more than he had at first observed.

"The Cap," he said, "is a fool."

He remembered the advice given by the Ox Goad of Religion to the first Sir Jocelyn to exercise moderation. The reason for that advice, however, existed no longer. He would not now be burnt if all the bishops and clergy of the Established Church knew to a man that he had such a Cap. On the contrary it would be regarded as a very interesting fact and useful for religion in many ways. He must try, however, he said, to instruct his servant in larger ideas. No doubt, in the latter days of his uncle, the tendency to moderate, or even penurious ways had been suffered to grow and to develop. It must be checked. Money must be had, and in amounts worth naming. Three pounds odd! and then sixpence-halfpenny!

He met his friends coming out of church. Nelly, as he expected, as sweet as a rose in June; Caroline, perhaps, more resembling a full-blown dahlia. He walked through the Park to their house in Craven Gardens; Nelly, however, walked with her mother and Annesley, who also happened to be on the spot, while he walked with Caroline, who developed at some length the newest ideas in natural selection. He was asked to luncheon and sat beside Caroline, who continued her discourse, while Nellie and Annesley were talking all kinds of delightful and frivolous things. After luncheon Caroline said that as Sir Jocelyn took so much interest in these things, she would show him some papers on the subject which contained her ideas. She did, and the afternoon passed like a bad dream, with the vision of an unattainable Nelly at the other end of the room, as a mirage in the desert shows springs and wells to the thirsty

traveler. He might have wished, but he was afraid. He could not trust his Cap; something horrible might be done; something stupid would certainly be done. The servant might be zealous, but as yet he had not shown that he was intelligent.

He came away melancholy.

"My dear," said Mrs. Staunton to Caroline, when he had gone, "Sir Jocelyn seems to improve. He is quiet and—well—amenable, I should say. He comes of a good family, and his title is as old as a baronetcy can be. There is, I know, a place in the country, but I am told there is no money. The last baronet spent it all."

Caroline reflected.

"If a woman must marry," she said, "and, perhaps, as things are, it is better that she should for her own independence, a docile husband with a good social position— But perhaps he is not thinking of such a thing at all."

"My dear, he comes here constantly. It is not for Nelly, who cannot afford to marry a poor man. Therefore——"

She was silent, and Caroline made no reply. There comes a time even to the coldest of women, when the married condition appears desirable in some respects. She had not always been the coldest of women, and now the thought of a possible wooer brought back to her mind that memory of a former lover in the days when she, alas! was as poor as her sister Nelly. A warm flush came upon her cheek and her eye softened as she thought of the brave boy who loved her when she was eighteen and he one-and-twenty; and how they had to part. He was gone. But things might have been so different.

"I shall meet them again on Wednesday," Sir Jocelyn thought. "They are going to Lady Hambledon's. If that Cap of mine has any power at all, it shall be brought into use on that evening. I must have—let me see—first of all, opportunity of speaking to her; next, I suppose, I can ask for eloquence or persuasive power—the opportunity must not be thrown away. And she must be well-disposed—do you hear?" he addressed the invisible servant. "No fooling on Wednesday, or——" He left the consequences to the imagination of his menial, perhaps because he did not himself quite see his way to producing any consequences. What are you to do, in fact, with an invisible, impalpable servant, the laws of whose being you know not, whom you cannot kick, or discharge, or cut down in wages, or anything?



In the evening a thing happened which helped to confirm him in the reality of his Cap, and at the same time made him distrustful of himself as well as of his slave.

It was rather late, in fact about twelve o'clock. Jocelyn was walking quietly home from the Club along the safest thoroughfare in Europe—at least the chief of the Criminal Investigation Department said so. They used to call it the Detective Department, but changed the name because nothing was ever detected, and the term investigation does not imply the arrival at any practical result. There were still a few passengers in the street. One of them, a shambling, miserable-looking creature, besought alms of Jocelyn, who gave him something, and then fell a moralizing on the mysteries of the criminal and pauper class in London. "That man," he said to himself, "is, I suppose, a vagrant, a person without any visible means of existence. Fill him with beef and beer, or gin, and he will become pot-valiant enough to think of obtaining more of such things by force or fraud instead of by begging. Then he will become one of the dangerous class. Poor beggar! I wish I could do something to help one of these poor wretches." Immediately afterwards he heard the sound of personal altercation. Two men, both in overcoats and evening dress, were struggling together, and one of them raised the cry of "Police!" Then there was the sound of a well-planted blow, and one of the men broke away and ran as hard as he could towards Jocelyn. The other man, knocked for the moment out of time, quickly gathered himself together and ran in pursuit. Jocelyn, by instinct, tried to stop the first man, who, by a dexterous trip-up with his foot, flung him straight into the arms of the second, his pursuer. He, somewhat groggy with the blow he had received, collared Jocelyn and rolled over with him.

"I give him in charge," he cried, as a policeman came up. "I give him in charge—robbery with violencee."

"But, my dear sir," explained Jocelyn, "it is a mistake. You have got the wrong man."

"Dessay," said the policeman. "You can explain that little matter at the station, where you are a going to."

"Little matter?" repeated the man who had been robbed. "You call it a little matter to be robbed of watch and chain in Piccadilly by a fellow who asks you for a light to his cigar, and then plants as neat a lefthander between your eyes as you can——"

"Why!" cried Jocelyn. "It's Annesley!"

It was.

"Well," said the policeman, when he understood, and ceased to suspect; "as for him, he's got safe enough off, this journey. And as for you, sir," he addressed Jocelyn, "you couldn't have done a better turn to that fellow—I know who he is—than to let him chuck you into the other gentleman's arms."

Again Jocelyn had obtained the wish of his heart. He had, thanks to the Cap, done something to help one of "these poor wretches."

## V.

JOCELYN reserved his final trial of his power for Wednesday evening. Meanwhile, he thought he would let the Cap rest. But one thing happened, which troubled him greatly. His housekeeper's daughter,—she was a girl of fourteen or so, all knuckles and elbows—brought up his breakfast crying.

"What is the matter?" he asked.

"Please, Sir Jocelyn, mother's had a terrible loss."

"What has she lost?"

"She's lost her purse, Sir Jocelyn, sir, with three pound fourteen and ninepence-farthing in it. I don't know what we *shall* do. And I've lost my lucky sixpence. And Bobby, he's lost his ha'penny."

Jocelyn turned crimson with wrath and shame. His housekeeper's purse! The girl's lucky sixpence! And the child's halfpenny! His Jinn had placed them all in his pocket!

"I am very sorry," he stammered. "As for the purse, I can't restore—I mean—find that for you. But—have you looked everywhere?"

"Oh, everywhere, sir."

"Look here, Eliza. Here are four pounds,"—he would have handed over the exact sum, but he remembered in time that the lucky sixpence was among the coins in his pocket, and would certainly be identified,—"*here are four sovereigns. Tell your mother to buy herself a new purse, and if she loses her money again, I shall not find it for her. Turn your lucky sixpence into a shilling, and Bobby's halfpenny into a sixpence.*"

When she was gone he pulled out the Cap, and set it before him on the table. "You are a common Thief," he said, shaking his forefinger. "You are so lazy that, when I ask for



money, you go to the housekeeper's room and steal—steal her purse. You are a disgraceful sneak and thief. Another such action, and I will——” here he remembered that he wanted the services of the Cap for Wednesday, and said no more. But he was profoundly disgusted. If money could only be had by stealing, how could he accept any money at all? Then he reflected. There is so much money and no more in the world. All this money has owners. The owners do not part with their money except as pay for services done. How, then, can money be got by any servants of a Wishing Cap except by stealing it? But to steal a poor housekeeper's money! Mean!—mean! Yet for a Baronet to accept money stolen from anybody! Impossible. And so vanished at one blow his income of 13,477*l.* 8*s.* 10 1-4*d.* The matter opened a large field for inquiry which he “argued out” as before. That is to say, he got hopelessly fogged over it.

This matter caused him a good deal of annoyance. There were other things, too, which made him suspect the power, or the intelligence, of the Cap. Thus, it was vexatious, when he had merely wished, as so many well-meaning people do sometimes wish, that he was able to send to certain cases of distress, coals or help in other ways, to be told by the housekeeper that the ton of coals he had ordered was come, “and please, here is the bill.” He paid it silently. Again, he was in his dressing-room, thinking of Nelly Staunton. “The case is as hopeless,” he said to himself, “as if seas divided us. I wish,” he added gloomily, “seas did divide us.” Was it by accident, or was it by the meddlesome and mistaken action of the Cap—he always called it the Cap to avoid the somewhat invidious phrase, Slave, or Demon of the Cap—that at this moment he kicked over the pail containing his bath water, and made, of course, a great and horrible pool? He sat down and considered. As for the ton of coals, he had ordered them: but then they came at the very moment when he was wishing that he *had* coals to send. He had himself kicked over the pail; but then, could it have been zeal on the part of the Cap to carry out, however imperfectly, even impossible orders?

On the Monday evening he met a lot of people who had all at some time or other gone in for spiritualistic business. This was indeed their bond of union. After dinner a good many wonderful stories were told, and there was talk about Volition, Magnetism, Clairvoyance, and the like,

"I am sometimes interested," said a lady who was present, one of those who believe everything, "in the old stories about Slaves of the Lamp, the Ring, or the Jewel. They seem to me illustrative of the supreme power which the Will of man has been known to achieve in rare cases; that, namely, when he can command even senseless matter and make it obey him."

"As, for instance," said Jocelyn, waking up, for this seemed likely to interest him, "if I was to order this glass to be upset. Pardon me, but I did not ask Mr. Andersen to upset it."

Yet it was upset. Mr. Andersen, one of the guests, had at that moment knocked it over.

"That, certainly," observed the lady, "would be an exercise of Will of a very singular and remarkable kind. It belongs to the class of phenomena which the Orientals accounted for by the invention of their so-called Slaves. Solomon had such slaves. Mohammed had them. Every great man had them."

"Do you think," asked Jocelyn anxiously, "that they exist now?"

"The slaves? Certainly not." This lady, it is evident, knew a great deal. "But the power—yes—oh yes!—that exists if we can attain to it." She was a woman about thirty years of age, with large full eyes. "If I choose to exercise my Will, Sir Jocelyn, you will advance towards me whether you like it or not."

"I very much doubt that; but," said Jocelyn recklessly, "if I choose to exercise my Will, you shall recede from me."

"Really!" said the lady scornfully; we will try if you please. My Will against your Will. You shall advance, but I will not recede."

No one had ever before suspected young Sir Jocelyn of any pretence at supernatural powers, so that they all laughed and expected instant discomfiture. Yet a remarkable thing happened. The lady sat in a chair before him, and Jocelyn fixed his eyes upon hers, which met his with a dilated glare. He did not advance, but presently the lady's chair began to move backward, very slowly. She sprang up with a shriek of affright, and the chair fell over.

"What have you done?" she cried. "Some one was pulling the chair."

"Very clever indeed," observed a man who was addicted to

feats of legerdemain and deception. "Very clever, Sir Jocelyn; you have deceived even me. But you will not do it twice, otherwise I shall find out how you did it."

"No," he replied, half ashamed, "not twice. A trick," he added, "ought not to be done over again."

"A trick?" said the lady. "But no—that was no trick. If the chair were not actually pulled, why you must have the power, Sir Jocelyn. Yes: you have the Will that causes even inanimate matter to move. It was not me but the chair that you repelled."

He deprecated, modestly, the possession of so strong a Will. The story, however, without the names, has been preserved, and may be read among the papers of the Psychical Society. It is one of their choicest and best authenticated anecdotes. But the real simple truth is not known to them, and in revealing it one does but set the narrative, so to speak, upon a different platform. It is no longer a mysterious Will but a mysterious Agent.

"It is a long time," observed the Mr. Andersen, who had upset the glass—he was a bright and sprightly Americanized Dane—"it is a long time since I occupied myself with the secrets and mysteries of the unseen world, but if you please I will give you an account of the final result at which I arrived."

"You did get a result, then," said the lady of the strong Will.

"You shall hear. I was out camping one night; all the fellows had gone to sleep except me, and I was keeping watch by the camp-fire with my six-shooter and the big dog for company. The sky above us was as clear and pure as a young maiden's heart, and the tall trees stood up against the sky like sentinels, dark and steadfast, and the whole air was as still—as still as a fellow keeps when he wants to see if the other fellow will copper a queen or not. But I fell to thinking and thinking: and there was some one far away that I wanted so much to see and to know what . . . that person—might be thinking and doing——"

"And you saw her!" cried the lady.

"I remembered," he went on, not regarding the interruption, "how the fellow who taught us the mesmeric passes told me what an ever so strong mesmeric power I possessed, and I thought that here, if ever, was a high old time to try that power. I looked round at the still sky, and the quiet trees, and the sleeping fellows, and I just began to wish,



Then the big dog lifted up his head and made as though he'd like to give a howl, and looked at my face, and it seemed as if he believed he'd best swallow that howl. The more he didn't howl the more I wished : and I wished and I wished and I wished till it seemed as if the whole world was standing still to judge how wonderful I was wishing, and then there came a faint rustle way off among the tops of the trees, and I thought there was something, may be, beginning to come out of it all. And I wished and I wished and I wished. And . . .” here he paused in a manner which thrilled his hearers.

“ Well ?” asked Jocelyn, giving voice to the general expectation.

“ And, by Jupiter, Sir Jocelyn,” said the narrator, “ nothing never came of it.”

## VI.

BEFORE going to the ball at Lady Hambledon's, Jocelyn took the most careful precautions to prevent any possible mistake. He put the Cap before him and lectured it solemnly.

“ Now, you understand, there is to be no fooling this evening. I am going to Lady Hambledon's—don't confound her with any other Hambledon—Lady Hambledon in Brook Street ; the Stauntons are going to be there : you will arrange an opportunity for me to speak to—the young lady ; you will do your best to—to stimulate—to give me a shove if I get stuck ; you will also, if that is possible, predispose the young lady in my favor. I don't think there is anything more you can do. See that, this evening at least, you make no blunders. Remember the housekeeper's purse.” By this time he had learned to avoid the phrase “ I wish ” as most dangerous and misleading, when a servant of limited intellect interprets every wish literally.

He went off, however, comforted with the conviction that really he had said all that was necessary to say. If this Cap, or the Slave of the Cap, was not a fool and an imbecile, his orders would be executed to the letter. He was a little excited, of course ; anybody would have been so under the circumstances. Not only was his happiness at stake—at five-and-twenty one's whole future happiness is very often at stake—but he was about to test and prove the powers of the Cap. Hitherto that power had not been exercised to his advantage in any way. He should now ascertain exactly whether he was going to be a real wizard, or quite a common person like



other young Baronets. On the stairs he overheard a whispered conversation which made him feel uneasy.

"I saw the Stauntons go up just now," said one.

"And I saw Annesley go up just before them," said another. "Everybody says that he is hard hit. Came here after her, of course."

Nothing absolutely to connect Annesley with Nelly. Yet he was uneasy. Certainly, Annesley would not be hard hit by Caroline. Two people full of ideas cannot marry and be happy. No, it must be Nelly. He fortified himself with the thought of his Cap, and went on upstairs.

The first thing he saw was Nelly herself, dancing with Annesley. "Confound him!" said Jocelyn. "He is as graceful as an ostrich!" On the other side of the room sat Mrs. Staunton. To her he made his way, and reached her just at the moment when Caroline was brought back to the same spot by her partner in the last dance. He could do nothing less than ask Caroline for the valse which was just begun. She was disengaged.

At this juncture there fell upon him the strangest feeling possible. It was exactly as if he was being guided. He felt as if some one were leading him, and he seemed to hear a whisper saying, "Everything is arranged according to your Excellency's commands." The consciousness of supernatural presence in a London ball-room is a very strange thing. There is an incongruity in it; it makes one act and feel as if in a dream. It was in a waking dream that Jocelyn performed that dance. Presently—he was not in the least surprised now, whatever should happen—he found himself sitting in the conservatory with Caroline. She was discoursing in a broad philosophical spirit on the futility of human hopes and opportunities.

Then he heard his own voice asking her "What is the use of opportunities unless one knows how to use them?"

"What indeed?" replied Caroline; "but surely, Sir Jocelyn, it is only the weaker sort to whom that happens? The strong"—here she directed an encouraging glance at him—"can always use, and can even make, if need be, their opportunities."

"Yes:" Jocelyn forced the conversation a step lower; "but if a girl won't give a fellow a chance."

"I think," said Caroline, "that any man can find his chance, if he likes to seize it."

There was a pause—Jocelyn felt himself impelled to speak. It was as if some one was pushing him towards a precipice. When he afterwards thought of himself and his extraordinary behavior at this moment, he could only account for it by the theory that he was compelled to speak and to conduct himself in this wonderful way. “You must have seen,” he whispered, “you must have seen all this time, that I have been hoping for a chance, and was unable to get one. There was always your mother or your sister in the way. And I did hope—I mean—I did think that the Cap—I mean that I did rather fancy that one might perhaps get a chance here, though it isn’t exactly what I ordered and wished. But I can’t help it. In fact I made up my mind last Sunday that it must be to-night or never. But what with the crush, and seeing other fellows cut in—Annesley and the others——”

Caroline interrupted this incoherent speech, which, however, could have but one meaning. “This is not the only place or the only time in the world.”

“Well,” said Jocelyn, “may I call to-morrow? But then—oh! this isn’t what I wanted—may I call—” his eyes wandered, and he began a kind of love-babble, yet with a look of bewilderment.

Caroline listened calmly. She remembered another love-scene years before, when much the same kind of thing was said to her, though her lover then had a far different expression in his eyes. They were hungry eyes, and terrified her. Jocelyn’s were bewildered eyes, and made her feel just a little contemptuous. Even the coldest women like some fierceness in their wooer.

“Hush!” she said, “you will be overheard. Take me now back to mamma. We are going immediately. You may come to-morrow at five.”

He pressed her hand and took her back. Nelly was with her mother, Annesley in attendance. She glanced at her sister, and caught in reply a smile so full of meaning, that she did not hesitate to bestow a look upon Jocelyn of the sweetest sympathy. Her pretty eyes and this sympathetic look of sisterly—yes! sisterly—pleasure, completed the business. It wanted nothing but Nelly’s sympathy to round off the situation and fill up his cup of misery.

Then they went away. Jocelyn retired to a comparatively secluded place on the landing, and there, leaning against a door, he began to curse his fate and his folly. He was so

absorbed in railing at fortune and in self-pity, that he absolutely forgot the very existence of the Cap. The situation was too desperate; in a lesser stress of circumstances he would have remembered it; but as yet he did not even connect the Cap with the present fearful disaster, of which the worst was that it could not possibly be worse; it was hopeless; he had told a girl to whom he was utterly indifferent, that he was in love with her; without being drunk, or blinded for a space by her charms, he had addressed words to her which he had intended for her sister. "Oh," he groaned, "I wish I were somehow, anyhow, out of this horrible situation!"

As he spoke, he involuntarily straightened his legs and leaned back with a jerk. The door opened, and he fell back with a fearful crash of broken glass upon the back stairs and a tray of ices on the way to the tea-room.

Unlucky Jocelyn! To fall down stairs backwards is at best undignified, but who can describe the indignity and discomfort of falling in such circumstances as this? He was helped to his feet by some of the servants, and slipped away as quickly as he could.

The cool night air restored him a little; he found himself able to think coherently; and he now understood that the whole of this miserable evening's work was due to his infernal Cap.

He took it out of the cabinet as soon as he reached his chambers. "You fool! you beast! you blind, blundering block-head!" he thus addressed the Cap. "It is all your doing. The wrong girl? Yes: of course it was the wrong girl. Didn't give you her name? You ought to have known it. Girl you talked so long with?"—All this time he seemed to be hearing and answering excuses. "Talked so long with——" He sank in a chair and groaned. Alas! it was his own fault; he had forgotten to name the girl; the Slave of the Cap knew that he wanted one of the Stauntons, and supposed that he wanted the one with whom he had conversed so much on Sunday. How should he know?

He mixed a glass of whisky and seltzer.

"I wish," he said, desperately, "that the stuff would poison me."

He drank off half the tumbler. Heavens! it was methylated spirit that he had poured into the glass. His wish was very nearly gratified. Fortunately the quantity he had drunk



proved the cause of his safety. Over the bad quarter of an hour which followed let us drop the veil of pity.

But he was to have another and as rude a lesson in the activity of his slave. He awoke in the middle of the night, with a sort of nightmare, in which Caroline was lecturing him and saying, "I am to be your companion all your life. You will never cease listening to the voice of instruction." The weight of his horrible blunder became intolerable to him. He threw off the clothes and sat up in bed. "I wish," he gasped, "I wish I was dead." Something seized him by the throat. He could not breathe. He sprang from the bed and rushed to the window for air. He was choking. He battled with the fit, or whatever it was, which held him for three or four minutes and left him purple in the face and trembling in the limbs.

"It is spasmodic asthma," he said, when he had recovered a little. "My father had it, and his father had it. I knew it would come some day." At the same time, it was odd that it should come just when he was wishing to be dead. And the constriction of the pipes did seem astonishingly like the fingers of some one trying to throttle him.

## VII.

"DEAR SIR JOCELYN"—it was a note from Mrs. Staunton—"I shall be very glad to see you to-day at twelve. Caroline tells me you have something *important*—may I guess what it is?—to say to me.—Yours very sincerely, JULIA STAUNTON."

Jocelyn received this note with the cup of tea which he took in bed according to vicious morning usage. He read it and groaned. It meant, this harmless note, nothing short of a life-long lecture from a female philosopher, and he a perfectly frivolous young man!

He fell back upon his pillow and groaned. Then he foolishly began to wish, forgetting his Cap. "I wish the confounded letter could be washed out of existence," he said, and with an impatient gesture threw out his arms and upset the cup of tea over the sheet. It would take ten minutes to get another. "It's that accursed Cap," he said. "It always takes one up wrong. I've a good mind to burn it." He dressed himself in the vilest temper. Had he heard the conversation at that moment going on between Caroline and her mother, he would have been more angry still,



"I do not pretend," said the young lady, "to feel any violent attachment for him. That kind of thing is over for me. There was a time, as you know——"

"My dear," said her mother, "that is so long ago, and you were so very young, and it was before your uncle died."

"Yes, it is so long ago," said Caroline; "I am seven-and-twenty now, two years older than Jocelyn. Poor boy! he is weak, but I think I shall have a docile husband; unless, to be sure, he turns stubborn, as weak men sometimes do. In that case——" Her face hardened, and her mother felt that if Caroline's husband should prove stubborn, there would be a game of "Pull devil, pull baker."

There was, Jocelyn felt, no way out of it at all, unless the way of flight which is always open to everybody. And then, what a tremendous fool he would seem! As for the truth, it could not possibly be told. That, at any rate, must be concealed, and at this point he began to understand some of the inconveniences, besides that of being misunderstood, in keeping a private demon. It is not, nowadays, that you would be burned if it were found out. Quite the contrary: all the clergymen in the world would be delighted at finding an argument so irrefragable against atheists and rationalists. The thing was wrong, of course, but beautifully opportune. But it would be so supremely ridiculous. A Slave of the Cap, Jinn, or Afreet, who could only find his master money by stealing the housekeeper's purse; who interpreted a wish, without the least regard to consequences, literally and blindly; who led his master into the most ridiculous scrapes, even to getting him engaged to the wrong girl: a blundering stupid slave—this, if you please, would be simply ridiculous. As for Nelly, his chance with her was hopelessly gone, even if, by any accident, he could break off with her sister. Yet, he thought, he should like to know if there was any truth in the report about her and Annesley. "I wish," he said, "I wish, now, that I had never known her."

Then it became apparent to him that he really never had known her at all. She could not suspect his intentions because she had no opportunity of guessing them: and he remembered that though he had known the Stauntons a good while he had never once got an opportunity of talking with her alone, except at a dance, and then her card was always filled up for the whole time she stayed. Sympathetic eyes are very sweet, but they do not mean an understanding without being told that a

man is in love with one. To do Nelly justice, she had never thought of Jocelyn in this way. He was an agreeable young man to dance with : he came to afternoon tea and talked with Caroline, or rather listened : she thought he was not very clever, but he seemed nice.

Mrs. Staunton received Jocelyn with great cordiality. "Let me," she said, "hear at once, my dear Jocelyn, what you wish to say to me." It was a sign of the very worst that she addressed him by his Christian name, without the handle, for the first time.

"Caroline has told me, that, last night——"

"Yes," said Jocelyn. "I wish she hadn't." The last words *sotto voce*.

"She did not tell me all," replied Mrs. Staunton. "In fact very little, but I gathered——"

"I told her," said Jocelyn in a tone most melancholy and even sepulchral, "I told her that I loved her."

"Yes—I gathered so much—and, indeed, I was not surprised. To love my Caroline betrays, as well as becomes, a liberal education. Yet I need not disguise from you, Jocelyn," the young lady's mamma continued, "that from one point of view—the only one, I am bound to confess—the match is undesirable. You are of ancient family ; you have rank : you have, I am assured, excellent morals and the best principles : but, my dear boy, you have, pardon me for reminding you of it, so scanty a fortune."

"It is true," Jocelyn said briskly, and plucking up a little hope : "and if you think that obstacle insurmountable—if, I say, Mrs. Staunton, that fact stands in the way—I will at once withdraw." He half rose as if to withdraw at once.

"It would have been insurmountable in Nelly's case," said Mrs. Staunton, "because my poor Nelly will have but a slender portion. With Caroline the case is different. The dear girl is provided for by her uncle's bequest, and though you will not be really rich, there will be enough. No, Jocelyn, the objection is not insurmountable, but I feel it my duty to state its existence and its nature. I want you to understand entirely my feelings. And, in fact, my dear Jocelyn," she gave him her hand, which he pressed, but languidly, "you have my full permission to go on with your suit and my very best wishes for your success, because I think, nay, I am sure, that you already appreciate Caroline at her true value and will

make her happiness your only study." Jocelyn murmured something.

"It is not often that two sisters get engaged on the same day," Mrs. Staunton continued, smiling. "Yet it will please you to hear that I have this morning already consented to Nelly's engagement with Mr. Annesley."

"With Annesley?" It was true, then. All was indeed over now. Yes: when one is already hopelessly crushed, one more wheel may go over without materially increasing the agony.

"We have not known him long, but he bears, so far as we can learn, as good a character as one can desire. He is an intimate friend of your own, Jocelyn, is he not?"

"He is," said Jocelyn gloomily. "He nearly poisoned me last Saturday."

"That is indeed a proof of sincere friendship," the lady replied, laughing. "He and Nelly have been attached to each other, it seems, for some time, though the foolish couple said nothing to me about it: and at last— Well, I hope they will be happy. In addition to other advantages he has a large private income."

"He has, I believe, about four thousand a year. Frillings did it, in Coventry,"

"Ye—yes—so many of our best families have made their fortune in trade. We must not think too much of these things. And he certainly has as good a manner as one would expect in an Earl." Then a smile, doubtless at the thought of the four thousand a year, stole over her motherly face. "It is, certainly, pleasant to think that the dear girl will have everything that a reasonable person can desire. His principles, too, are excellent. And he is, I am assured, a remarkably clever man."

Jocelyn said nothing. He had, in fact, nothing to say, except that all young men with four thousand a year are believed to possess excellent principles.

"And now," she said, "you may go to Caroline. My dear boy, why, why did not your uncle, or your father, make money in Frillings at Coventry?"

He went to Caroline. But it was with creeping feet, as a schoolboy goes to school, and with hanging head, as that boy goes on his way to certain punishment.

"What on earth am I to say to her?" he thought. "Am I to kiss her? Will she expect me to kiss her? Hang it! I



don't want to kiss her. I wish I could kiss Nelly instead."

Just then Nelly herself ran out. "Oh! Jocelyn," she said, "you have seen mamma. Of course it is all right. I am so glad. You are going to Caroline—poor Caroline! You are going to be my brother. I am so glad, and I am so happy—we are all so happy—did mamma tell you about me as well? Wish me joy, brother Jocelyn."

"My dear Nelly," he said, with a little sob in his voice, "I suppose I may call you Nelly, now, and my dear Nelly as well. I sincerely wish you all the joy that the world has to give."

She put up her face and smiled. He stooped and kissed her forehead.

"Be happy, sister Nelly," he whispered, and left her.

Nelly wondered why there was a tear in his eye. Her own lover certainly had not shed one tear since he first came a courting: but then men are different.

Caroline was calmly expecting her wooer. She half rose when he opened the door, and her cheek flushed. She wished the business over.

"Caroline," he said. But he could say no more. His voice and his speech failed him.

"Jocelyn," she replied. And then, because in another moment the situation would have become strained—and, besides, he was a gentleman and would not give her pain—and, again, if there was any mistake, it was his own folly that had done it—he took both her hands and drew her gently towards him and kissed her lips, without another word of love or of protestation.

Then he sat beside her, keeping her hand in his, and she began to talk of marriage and its duties, especially the duty of the husband, from a lofty philosophical point of view. It was agreed that she was to have absolute freedom: to take up any opinion: to advocate any cause, that she pleased—at that moment, because she varied a good deal, she was thinking what a splendid field was open to any one, especially any woman, who would preach Buddhism and the Great Renunciation. She made no allusion at all to her fortune, but Jocelyn perfectly understood that she meant to manage her house in her own way. As for himself she designed, she said, a career for him. Of course, he would give up the F. O. And so on. He mildly acquiesced in everything. His own slave had landed him in a slavery worse than anything ever imagined or



described. He was to spend his life under the rule of a strong-minded woman of advanced opinions.

## VIII.

THEN followed two or three weeks of which Jocelyn thinks now, with a kind of wondering horror. He was expected to be continually in attendance. He was expected to listen diligently. He was even expected to read a great many books, lists of which were prepared for him. Everything, he clearly perceived, was to be arranged for him. Very well: nothing mattered now. Let things go on in their own way.

The worst of all was the abominably selfish rapture with which Annesley, of whom he now, very naturally, saw a great deal, treated him. The man could talk of nothing but the perfections of Nelly. As poor Jocelyn knew these perfections, and had every opportunity of studying them daily, the words of the accepted suitor went into his heart like a knife. Yet he could not object to listen, or contradict his friend, or show any weariness. To be sure he might have conversed about Caroline, but it seemed ridiculous. Everybody knew that she was regularly and faultlessly beautiful; everybody also knew that she was strong-minded and held all kinds of views. Besides, he could not trust himself to speak of her. It was bad enough every day to speak with her.

The two weddings were to take place on the same day, which was already fixed for the first week in July. It was arranged where the brides should spend their honeymoon—Caroline and Jocelyn in Germany; Nelly with her bridegroom at the Lakes. Meantime it was impossible not to perceive that Jocelyn, who ought to have been dancing, singing, and laughing, grew daily more silent and melancholy. Caroline, however, either did not or would not see this. Nelly, who did, wondered what it meant, and even taxed Jocelyn with the thing.

"What does it mean?" she said. "You get your heart's desire, and then you hang your head and sit mum. Why I haven't heard you laugh once since your engagement, and as for your smile, you smile as if you were going to have a tooth out."

"Nonsense!" said Jocelyn. "I suppose men are always quiet when they are most happy."

"Then Jack"—this was Annesley—"must be miserable in-

deed, for he is always laughing and singing and making a noise. Come, Jocelyn, tell me all about it. Are you in debt?"

"No."

"Are you—have you—"she blushed but insisted, "have you got any kind of previous engagement? Oh! I know young men sometimes entangle themselves foolishly,"—what a wise Nelly!—"and then have trouble in breaking off."

"It isn't that, Nelly. It really is nothing."

"Then laugh and hold up your head. Or I will pinch you, I will indeed. You are going to marry Caroline, who is the most beautiful girl in London and the cleverest, and you go about as if you wanted to sit in a corner and cry."

Jocelyn obeyed her and laughed, as cheerfully as a starving clown. When he went home, however, it was with a stern resolve. He would have it out with the Cap.

In taking it out of the cabinet, however, he took with it his uncle's letter and read it again. The latter part he read with new understanding "moderation:" "failure to comprehend:" "want of obedience:" yes—there was something wrong with this Slave of the Cap. As for the Cap itself, it looked surprisingly shabby; far worse than it had appeared when he first got possession of it."

"Now," he said—the time was midnight, and he was alone in his chamber—"let us understand this." He took the Cap in his hand. "If you can appear to me, Slave or Demon, show yourself to me and answer for your blunders if you can."

The same sensation of faintness which he had before experienced came over him again. When he opened his eyes, he saw before him the same vision of a tottering, battered old creature, with fiery bright eyes.

"I have done my best, Excellency," said the Slave of the Cap, in a tremulous quavering pipe.

"Your best! You have done everything that is stupid, blundering, and feeble. What does it mean? What the devil, I say, does it mean?"

"I beg your Excellency's pardon. If you had mentioned which young lady——"

"Jinn! You knocked me head-over-heels down the back stairs."

"It was the *only* way out of it, You wished to be out of it,"

"Slave of the Ox Goad of Religion! You stole the house-keeper's money."

"I have always stolen money for your Excellency's ancestors. You cannot have other people's money without stealing it. This was the nearest money, and I was anxious not to keep your Excellency waiting."

"You have covered me with disappointment and shame."

"I am old, sir. The Cap is falling to pieces. I have slaved for it for five hundred years. After five hundred years of work no Cap is at his best." He looked, indeed, at his very worst, so feeble and tottering was he. "In love matters," he went on, "I am still, however, excellent, as the late Sir Jocelyn always found me. Up to the very last I managed all his affairs for him. If I can do anything for your Excellency now"—

"You have already done enough for me. Stay"—a thought struck Jocelyn. "You would like your liberty."

"Surely, sir."

"You shall have it. I will throw this Cap into the fire—understand that!—on one condition: it is that you undo what you have already done. It is by your blundering and stupidity that I have become engaged to Caroline Staunton. Get me out of the engagement. But mind, nothing dishonorable: nothing that will affect my reputation, or hers: the thing must be broken off, by her, for some good reason of her own, and one which will do neither of us any harm. For my own part, I don't in the least understand how it is to be done. That is your look-out."

"Excellency, it shall be done. It shall be done immediately."

He vanished, and Jocelyn replaced the Cap in the Cabinet. It was with anxious heart that he lay down to sleep, nor did sleep come readily. He was quite sure, now, that the engagement would be broken off somehow, but he could not possibly understand how or why. There had been between them no quarrel nor the slightest disagreement: in fact, Jocelyn always agreed to everything: there was nothing, on either side, that was not perfectly well known; nothing, that is, as sometimes happens with young men, which might "come out and have to be explained." How— But, after all, it was the business of his servant to find out the way. He went asleep.

In the afternoon, next day, a note came to him at the Foreign Office. It was from Caroline, begging him to call upon her as soon as possible.



"I have," she said, "a very important communication to make to you—a confession—an apology if you please. Pray come to me."

He received this strange note with a feeling of the greatest relief. He knew that she was going to release him. Why or with what excuse he neither knew nor cared.

Caroline was in her own room, her study. She gave him her hand with some constraint, and when he would have kissed her, she refused. "No, Jocelyn," she said, "that is all over."

"But,—Caroline—why?" A smile of ineffable satisfaction stole over his face which she did not see. He would have been delighted to fall on his knees in order to show the depth of his gratitude. But he refrained and composed himself. At all events he would play the lover to the end, as he had begun. It was due, in fact, to the lady as well as to himself.

"Jocelyn," she said frankly, yet with some confusion in her eyes, "I have made a great mistake. Listen a moment, and forgive me if you can. It is now eight years since a certain man fell in love with me—and I with him. My poor boy—I have never felt—I know it, now—towards you as I did towards him. We could not marry because neither of us had any money. And then he went abroad. But he has come back—and—and—I have money now, if he has not—and—oh! Jocelyn—do you understand, now?"

"You have met him"—oh! rare and excellent Slave!—"You have met him, Caroline, and you love each other still." He wanted to dance and jump, but he did not: he spoke slowly with a face of extraordinary gravity.

"Oh! Jocelyn." Could this be the same Caroline? Why, she was soft-eyed and tearful, her cheeks were glowing, and her lips trembled. "Oh! Jocelyn. Can you forgive me? You loved me, too, poor boy, because you thought me, perhaps, better and wiser than many other women. Better, you see, I am not, though I may be wiser than some."

He gave her his hand.

"Caroline," he said heroically, "what does it matter for me, if only you are happy?"

"Then you do forgive me, Jocelyn? I cannot bear to think that you will break your heart over this—that I am the cause—"

"Forgive you? Caroline, you are much too good for me. I should never have made you happy. As for me,—" he



gulped a joyful laugh and choked, "as for me, do not think of me. I shall—in time—perhaps . . . Meantime, Caroline, we remain friends."

"Yes—always friends—yes," she replied hurriedly. Then she burst into tears. "I did not know, Jocelyn. I did not know. I thought I had forgotten him—indeed I did."

He lifted her hand and kissed it with reverence. Then he left her, went to the Club, and had a pint of champagne to pull himself together. As for what people said, when it became known, that mattered nothing, because, whatever they said, they did not say openly to him.

It may be mentioned that no alteration was made in the date of the double wedding: only that one of the bridegrooms was changed. It was a beautiful wedding, and nobody noticed Sir Jocelyn who was up in the gallery, his countenance wreathed with smiles.

When he left Caroline, Jocelyn went back to his chambers and prepared a little ceremony. He first lit the fire, then he took out the Cap and wrapped it in his uncle's letter: then he solemnly placed both Cap and letter in the flames.

"You are free, my friend," he said. "An old Cap and an old Slave are more trouble than they are worth. Perhaps, now that the Cap is burned, you will recover your youth."

There was no answer or any sign. And now nothing remains to Jocelyn of the family heirloom, except the picture of Sir Jocelyn de Haultegresse and Ali Ibn Yussûf, otherwise called Khanjar ed Dîn, or the Ox Goad of Religion.



## A QUAKERESS.

KATE INGLEBY stood at the drawing-room window in Curzon street tapping the tip of her little Wellington boot impatiently with her riding-whip. A sharp summer shower was pattering down upon the street, and Kate was waiting until it was over to go out for her daily ride. Not that a shower of rain made, as a rule, much difference to Miss Ingleby ; for she was accustomed to go out in all weathers. She waited to-day, simply because the friend she had promised to ride with declined to go out in a heavy thunder-storm, for which exercise of wise discretion Kate heartily despised her. She was getting very impatient. There seemed no end to the straight white rain shafts that came swiftly down from the heavy clouds. Miss Ingleby's chestnut mare, led by a groom, was walking up and down outside. Kate loved her dearly ; but there is a limit to equine affection, and at last she got quite tired of watching her. On the opposite side of the street was a book-seller and librarian, to whom she was accustomed to subscribe for the few three-volume novels, which at odd times she skimmed through. It struck her all at once that her uncle was dining at his club that night, that she herself had no engagement, and that she had no book of an exciting nature wherewith to while away the solitary evening. She gathered up her habit in one hand, and sallied forth, picking her way gingerly across the muddy street. She went into the back part of the shop, and stood turning over a whole heap of works of fiction which lay piled together on the counter.

Miss Ingleby had a tall well-made figure, which looked its best in a riding-habit. She was a handsome girl, and yet her beauty was not of the order that is universally admired. She had bright brown eyes, a small *retroussé* nose, a mouth that was full of decision and character, and a small head well set upon her shoulders. She wore her dark brown hair cut short all round her head, like a boy's, and in a profusion of thick crisp curls, upon which her riding-hat now sat a little bit to one side, with a decidedly rakish air. Miss Ingleby had many accomplishments, but they were all of one character. She could ride, fish, and swim ; she was a good actress and a clever mimic ; moreover, she could smoke cigarettes with enjoyment,

and shoot rabbits with precision. In addition to all this, she was the actual possessor of fifty thousand pounds comfortably invested in Government securities. With all these advantages, it was perhaps not wonderful that this young lady had a very high opinion of herself. Kate had heard it said that if you wish others to think well of you, you should begin by thinking well of yourself. She was determined to stand well in the opinion of other people; to be liked and admired was a monomania with her; so she set a good example to mankind by admiring and liking herself immensely.

As she stood in the far background of Mr. Adams the bookseller's shop, there entered two gentlemen, who came running in for a moment's shelter, and who stood in the doorway with their backs turned towards her, leaning upon their dripping umbrellas. Mr. Adams bowed obsequiously and addressed one of them as "My lord," begging him to take a seat. "My lord," however, a slim young man of about twenty-eight, declined to be seated and went on talking to his friend. Kate glanced once at the two figures in the doorway, and she noticed that my lord's friend was tall and fair, broad-shouldered and decidedly good-looking. She did not think, however, that she had ever seen either of them before, so she paid no particular attention to them, but went on turning over the novels and dipping into third volumes to see if she liked the look of them. The two young men talked. It did not occur to Kate to listen, yet, suddenly she heard one of them—the tall handsome man—remark:

"That's a goodish-looking chestnut walking up and down—I wonder who it belongs to."

"Oh, I can tell you," answered the other. "It belongs to that horrid girl, Miss Ingleby."

Kate started, and shut up the book she was fingering with a snap. An expression of horror came into her eyes, coupled with a blank amazement that was almost comical. She listened in very earnest to what might come next.

"What makes you call her horrid?" asked the tall man laughingly; "has she snubbed you, Kyrle?"

"Not she; I don't know her, thank God. She has got fifty thousand, they say."

"I see nothing horrible in that. She ought to suit you down to the ground, you genteel pauper!"

"She'd be dear at the price, or at any price, in fact; why, she swims like a fish, climbs trees like a monkey, talks slang



like a schoolboy, swears like a trooper, shoots like a keeper, and smokes—bah! like a chimney!”

“What a category of crimes!”

“After that, do you care to be introduced to this elegant heiress, Jack?”

“Not if I know it, thank you! If I had a chance, I should decline the honor. A woman of that description is revolting. I would go a long way to avoid coming across her.”

The shower was over. The two friends nodded to the shopman and took their departure. After a minute or two, Kate came into the front of the shop.

“Who were those two gentlemen?” she asked of the man.

“The slight dark one is Viscount Kyrle, miss, Lord Greyrock’s eldest son.”

“And the fair one?”

“Mr. Dormer, a great traveler, miss; he has just returned from the East.”

Kate colored hotly.

She mounted her horse and rode away; and it was characteristic of her that she utterly forgot to call for the friend she had promised to ride with. Instead of going anywhere near this lady’s house, she turned her horse southward and rode impetuously up to a certain doorway in South Belgravia with which she was familiar.

“Is Lady Ellerton in?”

Her ladyship was in her room dressing for her drive, she was told.

She bounded upstairs, two steps at a time, and burst like a whirlwind into the front bedroom.

“Good gracious, Kate! how you startled me!”

Lady Ellerton, a pretty little woman of some two-and-thirty years, whose delicate pink and white fairness, good temper, and prosperous circumstances generally, had somehow preserved her from looking her full age, sat before the toilet-table arranging the pale blue bows of her bonnet-strings.

“Adela, I have seen him!” cried Kate, sinking down on her knees by the side of her friend.

Lady Ellerton looked nervously round to see if her maid was still in the room, but finding that that damsel had discreetly retired, she inquired—

“Seen who? not Jack?”

“Yes, *Jack*, as you call him—your brother, Mr. Dormer.”

Lady Ellerton continued to pat down the flaxen curls of her

fringe with loving fingers, regarding her pretty face attentively in a hand-glass the while.

"Well?" she inquired unconcernedly, turning her head from side to side.

"I hate him!" said Kate, with tragic solemnity.

Lady Ellerton jumped, and the glass fell out of her hand upon the dressing-table.

"Good gracious!"

"And he hates me," said Miss Ingleby, in a deep voice of horror.

"Do you mean to tell me that you have met him somewhere, and quarrelled already? What crushing bad luck! What did he say to you?"

"Nothing."

"What did you say to him, then?"

"Nothing," she repeated gloomily.

"Then, what on earth—are you mad, Kate?—for goodness' sake, explain——"

"I was in a shop, they came in—your brother, and a dreadful friend of his, Lord Kyrle."

Adela nodded; the "dreadful friend" was a particular crony of her own, but she let that pass.

"They began talking about me—Lord Kyrle said I was a 'horrid girl'—he described me as a sort of wild animal, a tom-boy who climbed trees, a vulgar creature who swore and talked slang!—oh, it was shameful!"

"Well, but, Kitty, people *do* say you are fast, you know," suggested her friend.

"What do they mean by 'fast?' what does anybody mean?" she cried passionately; "they don't know themselves. It is true I have high spirits, and I like bodily exercise, but I never did the dreadful things that *brute* said of me."

"Cigarettes," murmured her ladyship.

"And where's the harm! there's no sin in a cigarette! But I haven't told you half. After he had given this delightful and *perfectly veracious* sketch of my character to your brother, he mentioned the amount of my fortune (that was correct enough), and asked him if he would like to be introduced to me; and Mr. Dormer replied that he would go a long way to avoid coming across me! There—what do you think of *that*?"

"Pooh! Jack will like you when he knows you, Kitty, as I do."

Miss Ingleby got up from her knees, and began pacing up and down the room; suddenly she stopped behind her friend's chair and put both hands on her shoulders.

"Adela, you know you meant your brother to marry me—hush! don't exclaim and don't deny it; I know exactly what you are going to say, so you needn't say it." Lady Ellerton had got very red. "I don't think you are at all to blame, my dear; if I had a great friend worth fifty thousand pounds, and a nice impecunious brother, I should do my best, too, to bring about a coalition of forces—but, Adela—let me tell you, it *won't do!*"

"Kate, how you do jump at conclusions!" murmured Adela confusedly, for Miss Ingleby had stated the case exactly.

"My dear, it won't do; I am not going to run the chance of being snubbed by any man, not even by the brother of my greatest friend. I refuse to meet Mr. Dormer, and I am not coming to Fosborough next week."

Who could have believed that so simple a statement could have created such a storm?

Lady Ellerton sprang to her feet as though she had been shot; she turned hot and cold, red and white by turns; she stormed and she raved; she entreated and she coaxed; she declared that without Kate she would be undone—her party be a failure, her house a howling wilderness, wherein everybody would be bored to death; and, worse than all, her private theatricals would have to be put off altogether. Finally, she burst into a passion of angry tears, which threatened to end in a fit of hysterics.

Then, suddenly, Kate relented.

"Very well, then, I'll come, and I'll act in the theatricals—but on one condition only. None of the people you have asked for the week know me. I shall not come in my own name, but as somebody else."

"What do you mean?"

"I shall come, not as Miss Ingleby, the heiress, the *fast, slangy* girl"—she jerked out the words spitefully—"but as Miss Rose, the Quakeress, the daughter of your old governess."

"Miss Rose?—a Quakeress—?" gasped Adela Ellerton.

"Yes, my name is Rose—Katherine Rose—so that will be true enough."

"But a Quakeress—how can you do it? Shall you say thee and thou?"

"No, that is out of date, they don't do it now; but I shall wear drabs and greys and be demure—oh, very demure—your brother will think me charming!"

"Don't be so sarcastic; but surely it can't be done—somebody will recognize you."

She tossed her hat off and seized a hairbrush. Away vanished all the crisp dark little curls that rippled all over her head, a straight parting, flattened locks falling back on either side, lowered eyelids, a little perked-up mouth that looked simplicity itself; the whole expression of her face, almost her very features, seemed to be changed. Lady Ellerton burst out laughing.

"My dear child, everybody says rightly; that you are the cleverest amateur actress in London! Why, I don't believe even James would recognize you."

"Sir James must be in the secret of course, but no one else; it will only be for four days, and then I go on to the Wigrams. You agree? All right, then I come!"

"And if I don't make that young man fall head over ears in love with me in four days," said Miss Ingleby to herself as she ran away down stairs, clenching her little fist as she went, "then shall I vote myself for ever unworthy of the name of Woman!"

A week later Jack Dormer stood in his sister's little blue and white boudoir at Fosborough Court in the county of Wessex. He had just arrived and the dressing-bell had rung, but still Jack lingered chatting to his favorite sister—leaning with his back against the mantlepiece, to the no small danger of the china menagerie of wild beasts which were arranged thereupon.

"And whom have you got staying in the house, Ady?"

"Oh, not a very amusing party, I fear; old Lord and Lady Sale, Mr. and Mrs. Halket, Mrs. Ritchie and her daughter—rather a loud girl, you remember."

"Yes," shudderingly, "her voice is a never-to-be-forgotten item of her presence."

"A cousin of James's, George Andrews, a clerk in the Board of Trade—and, let me see, who else—oh, only little Miss Rose."

"Who is Miss Rose, pray?"



"An insignificant little person ; a daughter of an old governess of mine."

"Rose—Rose. I don't remember the name."

"No ; it was before your time, you were a baby then," replied Lady Ellerton tranquilly ; for when a woman has made up her mind to tell lies, she is generally a thorough mistress of the art. "She is a Quakeress," she added calmly.

"A Quakeress ; how amusing ! I don't think I ever met one in society before ; does she say thee and thou?"

"Oh, no ; that is out of date now," replied Adela, quoting her friend's information on the subject ; "but you are not likely to speak to her, Jack, she won't interest you, poor little thing. And now really, my dear boy, we must go and dress for dinner ; look at the time !"

"By the way, Ady," said the young man, as he followed Lady Ellerton upstairs, "I hear an outrageous character of that friend of yours, Miss Ingleby ; she is not here, I suppose?"

"Oh dear, no !"

"Well, I'm glad of it, for I'm sure I shouldn't have liked her."

"You will see her next week at the Wigrams' ball."

"Well—I shan't dance with her, that is certain."

"Won't you, my friend !" muttered between her lips a young lady, who in the gathering twilight stood above them upon an upper flight of stairs. "We will see about that !"

Jack Dormer took Mrs. Halket in to dinner—she was rather pretty, but excessively dull ; the lady on the other side of him was Miss Ritchie. with the loud voice—she on the contrary was lively—over-lively, indeed, to please him—and she was moreover singularly plain. Jack, who was a perfect epicure on the subject of women, felt intensely bored between the two. In the intervals of eating his dinner and keeping up a desultory and forced conversation, his eyes wandered perpetually across the table to where, exactly opposite him, sat a young lady in a high grey silk dress. The dress was the first thing that struck him about her. There was all around him a great exhibition of bare necks and shoulders, and of fat arms displayed in all their unlovely length. Jack, who was fresh from a long residence in the East, where the charming mystery of veiled womanhood had exercised a strange fascination over his somewhat over-refined and sensitive mind, regarded these customs of modern English life with something akin to disgust. He looked up and down the length of the table :

Lady Sale, sitting at Sir James Ellerton's right hand, was enormously fat ; the dowager on the left was lean and bony ; other women at the table were blessed with figures which from various causes were ill-suited to the fashion of the day. And yet all were unanimously lavish in the liberal display of their charms.

"It is a remnant of barbarism !" said Jack to himself, and then his eyes rested once more with satisfaction upon the young lady opposite to him.

Her dove-grey dress was softened at the throat by folds of white tulle ; her sleeves were long, only displaying the rounded whiteness of her wrists and arms up to the elbow. Then from looking at her dress he began to look at her face. Her long eyelashes were for the most part downcast. If she looked up, the glances from her beautiful brown eyes seemed to him to be modest and intelligent. He noticed that when she talked to her neighbor her voice was low and gentle ; how different she seemed from all the other women ! How simple, how womanly, how *good*, was the expression in her quiet face ! Who was she, he wondered, and then suddenly he recollected ; of course this was "Miss Rose the Quakeress."

After dinner, when the gentlemen joined the ladies, he went straight up to her and sat down beside her.

"My sister told me who you were, Miss Rose, so you must forgive me for introducing myself. May I sit here and talk to you ?"

"Oh yes !" Her eyes fell and a bright color rose in her cheeks.

"I have been a long time out of England, traveling in Eastern countries, and you can't think how odd English society seems to me now I have come back to it."

"Yes?" still with downcast eyes, playing with the dove-colored folds of her dress.

"The women, for instance, they look so strange ; so—almost bold and unfeminine. I suppose it is because my eye is unaccustomed. Now you, for instance, *you* remind me more, do you know, of the women of the East, than anybody I have seen since I have been home."

"Oh ! Are they not very ignorant, poor things?" Up went the brown eyes flashing into his a look of innocent surprise.

Jack laughed. "Ah—you had me there. I do not mean that it is in their ignorance and want of education that you remind me of them."

"Oh, I am very glad of that!" with a little effusion that was complimentary. "I should not like you to think me ignorant."

"I am *sure* you are not," answered Jack very fervently, although why he was so sure of it he would have been puzzled to say. He was, however, very certain that Miss Rose had the loveliest eyes and the sweetest manner of any woman he had ever met, including all the Eastern Houris upon whom his memory dwelt with so much fondness.

He devoted himself to her the whole evening, and during the next day it was remarked that the grey frock—which by daylight was of cashmere instead of silk—was never without the attendant figure of handsome Jack Dormer in close proximity. Lady Ellerton and her easy-going husband, who had promised to do his part—which, as his wife said, was only to hold his tongue—looked on with amusement and with satisfaction. As to the Quakeress herself, it is difficult to explain exactly what was in her mind about the gigantic fraud she was perpetrating upon her innocent victim. She was very reticent upon the subject even when chance threw her alone in the society of her friend, and received the laughing congratulations upon her acting with an extraordinary quietness and a silence which was truly remarkable. It is, however, to be surmised that she threw herself into the part *con amore*, and that the character she was portraying was in no way unpleasant to her; for she evinced much willingness to be led into retired shrubbery walks, and showed no indisposition to unduly linger in distant greenhouses and summer-houses; so that Mrs. Ritchie made spiteful remarks about the aptitude of Quakeresses for flirtation, in spite of their charity-school-like personal appearance; and Lady Sale murmured some not original allusions to those quiescent waters whose springs are supposed to run in the depths of profundity.

Of course Jack never thought of taking his Quakeress into the stables—the only place for which Miss Rose experienced unhealthy longings, which she had some difficulty in suppressing. He was fond of horses, and would like to have gone to them himself and smoked his pipe there in peace and comfort. But it would have been a profanity to have subjected this sweet, old-fashioned blossom of a girl to the odors of stables and tobacco, and to the lowering atmosphere of a stable yard. It did cross Jack's mind once to think that it might be a nuisance to marry so delicate and pure a creature, from whom



the coarse influences of daily life must be for ever carefully guarded. But after all, one can't have everything, and anything was better than the fashionable girl of the present day—such a one, for instance, as his friend Kyrle had described to him.

As the days wore away, Jack Dormer was obliged to confess to himself that he was over head and ears in love with Miss Rose.

On the last evening of her visit there were to be private theatricals at Fosborough Court. A small farce was to be acted before a select but not a large audience, and the name of it was "The Girl of the Period."

"Are you going to act, Miss Rose?" asked Jack of his divinity.

"Oh no; I could not," she answered.

"No—acting is not in your line, I'll be bound; you are the last person on earth to care about making a public show of yourself."

At this moment Lady Ellerton burst wildly into the room, with an open telegram in her hand.

"What am I to do?" she cried. "I am in perfect despair. Here is a telegram from Miss Grey to say that she cannot come, her grandmother is dead, Oh, what shall I do!" Now "Miss Grey" was supposed to be the "leading lady" upon whom all the success of the night's entertainment depended, and without whom "The Girl of the Period" must needs fall to the ground. There was, however, no Miss Grey in existence. "Oh, what shall I do!" cried Lady Ellerton, wringing her hands and almost in tears (after all, she was as fine an actress as Kate Ingleby). "All the people are most as fine an actress as Kate, and scenery have arrived, asked, and the supper and the stage, what am I to do?" and how can I put it all off! Oh, Jack, I don't know.

"My dear girl, I'm awfully sorry, I'm part?" "What can be done; can nobody else take her part?" "No. Who is there? Miss Ritchie does the sprightly old maid", and Mrs. Halket the timid mother, and Colonel Spriggs the heavy father, and George Andrews the lover. He is the only one that can act a bit except Miss Grey; the whole thing depended upon her, and who is there who can take her part?"

The Miss Rose said very hesitatingly, "Oh, Lady Ellerton, I'm afraid I should do it very badly; but if you are in such a difficulty I would do my very best, if you have really no one



else; I would try—I learn very quickly by heart, and you might show me.’

“My dear, you are an angel, a darling!” cried Adela rapturously, clasping Miss Rose in her arms. “How *too* dear and good of you! I can’t tell you how grateful I am.”

“You are the first person in the world to do a kind and good-natured action,” whispered Jack in her ear, almost flatly contradicting the very last remark he had made to her. But he was in that idiotic condition of mind with regard to her, when whatever a woman does or says, or leaves unsaid or undone, seems to be equally perfection in a man’s eyes. Nevertheless, when Miss Rose had been carried away by his sister to be drilled and coached, he could not help owning to himself that, amiable and good-natured as was Miss Rose, he feared that her acting would be a failure.

“At such a short notice, and such a part, so wholly foreign to her nature! Poor little girl, how can she do it?”

It was with very nervous feelings that Jack watched the curtain go up before a crowded audience that evening.

He saw upon the stage Miss Rose, and yet Miss Rose mysteriously transformed; a wealth of dark curls over her brow, a red satin dress made in the latest fashion, and the glitter of diamonds upon her white smooth throat; and then the saucy glance of her laughing eyes, that seemed as if more than once they singled him out of the audience before her, the easy gestures, the perfect enunciation, the natural talent with which she went through a part in which she had acted many times before, filled him first with amazement, and lastly with admiration; she was more beautiful than he had ever conceived her to be, and her acting was so marvelous that it almost took away his breath. There came one scene wherein the “Girl of the Period” had to smoke a cigarette. Miss Rose went through the performance with a graceful ease which, although it made his heart stand still, was yet very far from jarring against his taste; the cigarette, as smoked by the Quakeress, became almost a poetical and feminine action. “Nothing,” he said to himself, “can vulgarize her; she is the innate embodiment of a lady in mind.”

Nevertheless, he was glad when the play was over. The curtain went down amid thunders of applause, and Miss Rose, in her grey silk Quakeress garb, came back presently and sat down among the audience, while some impromptu charades were being acted by the others.

Jack made room for her beside him.

"How did I do it?" she whispered to him.

"It was perfect. I am speechless with amazement at your acting. I had no idea you were so clever." The praise was grateful to her; she was conscious of having acted her best.

"If you had studied your part for weeks, you could not have done it better." She *had* studied it for weeks. She played with the buttons of her glove, and held her tongue. "It was dreadful to me to see you act that part like that," he went on in a whisper.

"Did it pain you?" She lifted her dark eyes and fixed them upon him, with an earnest yearning look in them; how different was now their expression from that which he had seen in them half an hour ago!

"Yes," he murmured back, "because I love you, and you know it." The charades were going on upon the stage, and the audience was in semi-darkness. She lowered her eyes, and a faint smile hovered upon her lips; was it of joy or was it of triumph? a little of each, perhaps. "I love you as you are, and yet everything you say and do is right in my eyes, because it is *you*," he went on passionately.

A twinkle in her downcast eye.

"Even the cigarettes?" she murmured.

"I forgave you even that; no other woman could have acted that, and yet produced no sensation of disgust upon me; and yet, dearest, tell me that you love me, and that, for my sake, you will never smoke a cigarette again in your life?"

"I will never smoke a cigarette again in my life," she answered; and she kept her word. But she would give him no answer to that other question, although he urged her to do so.

"Will you tell me to-morrow night at Wigrams' ball, then?"

"Do Quakers go to balls?"

"How can I tell—you will go, will you not? You are going to stay with people close by, I hear; they will surely take you."

"In my grey frock?" she asked with a smile.

"What does your frock matter? you are always lovely in my eyes. If you love me you will be there to meet me."

"Very well." She answered in her quiet Quaker-like manner. And he could get nothing more out of her.

The next morning, Miss Rose had taken her departure before the rest of the party assembled at a late breakfast table.

The ball was crowded ; the party from Fosborough Court arrived very late. As Jack Dormer edged his way through the block of people at the doorway, his eyes ran eagerly over the bright parterre of well-dressed women ; he saw there many beautiful faces, many brilliant dresses, much glitter of diamonds upon white necks and arms, but nowhere the little grey dress and the quiet demure face of the girl he looked for ; a pang went through his heart ; she was not there, then ! Then suddenly, through an opening in the crowd, he saw—what ?

A lovely woman clad in white, but white that was not so much the garb of virgin simplicity as the imperial whiteness of a queen—a white that shone with the lustre of rich satin softened by the fall of costly laces ; diamonds sparkled at her throat and ears, and glittered in shining circlets about her round white arms.

Could this indeed be Miss Rose the Quakeress ?

She was not dancing ; when she saw him she smiled, and held out her hand to him.

“How late you are—will you dance with me ?”

“Will I not !” he answered, passing his arm round her waist.

“What have you done to yourself to-night ?” he murmured in her ear.

“I have tried to make myself lovely in your eyes.”

“Because you love me ?”

“Because I love you,” she answered simply.

And that waltz straightway became as heaven itself to the infatuated young man.

“Hallo, old chap, you are making the running famously with the heiress ?” This was from Viscount Kyrle, who stood behind him, and slapped him playfully on the back.

“Heiress ? what heiress ? How do, Kyrle. I didn’t expect to see you to-night. Whom are you speaking about ?”

“About Miss Ingleby, to be sure, the fast young woman I warned you against !” said his friend, laughing.

“I really don’t know whom you mean, Kyrle !”

“Oh ho ! a good joke, my boy, when you have just been dancing with her, and she wouldn’t dance with anybody until you came !”

He looked across the room : Miss Rose stood talking to his sister ; her face was glowing with animation and excitement ; the Quakeress in her little grey frock seemed to have vanished. Suddenly the scales fell from Jack Dormer’s eyes, and he per-

ceived the truth ; his sister's greatest friend, whom she had written so often about, telling him he must really marry her ; the handsome, dashing Miss Ingleby, whom other people called "fast," but whom Adela swore by, declaring that her good heart and her true sterling character amply made up for a little over-exuberance of spirit in her manner, the Miss Ingleby who rode, and fished, and swam, and acted, yes, and *smoked cigarettes*—Miss Ingleby the heiress, and little Miss Rose the Quakeress, were one and the same person !

Jack walked straight across the room, and stood before her.

"Miss Kate Ingleby," he said, looking her full in the face, "you have taken me in shamefully."

She colored deeply, all over her cheeks and throat, and up to the very roots of her hair. Then she raised her dark eyes to his, looking at him penitently with a little pucker on her brow, like a naughty child waiting to be scolded.

"What was I to do?" she said deprecatingly. "I had the misfortune to fall in love with you at first sight, in a book-seller's shop, one wet morning, and at the same time I had the mortification of hearing you say you did not wish to know me. I could think of no other way of persuading you to think better of me than the character your friend gave of me. Won't you forgive me?" she added softly.

He tried to frown, but a smile was in his eyes.

"On one condition—will you be married in your Quaker's dress?"

"Yes, if I am to be married to you, Jack!" she answered, speaking his name for the first time with that sweet timidity which a man loves to hear upon the lips of the woman he loves.

As to Lord Kyrle, he was made to feel that he had put his foot very much into it, on a certain wet morning, in Adams the book-seller's shop. Nevertheless, Kate always declared herself to be under a debt of gratitude to him ; for had it not been for his remarks concerning her, she would never, she declared, have been so bent upon proving to Jack that it was possible for him to fall in love with "that horrid girl,"—E. LOVETT CAMERON, in *Belgravia*,



## A BONE OF CONTENTION.

THE first baby is not generally supposed to be a bone of contention. On the contrary it is, as a rule, considered a bond of union between its parents. Strange, however, to say, this was not the case with Captain Grant, of the —th Hussars, and his wife. Indeed it nearly caused an estrangement, and it certainly had to answer for the only quarrel they ever had.

There is no doubt that when the infant first made its appearance, Jack Grant was as fond and proud a father as could be found in the United Kingdom. He tried to see the numerous likenesses to various relatives which his wife discovered in their son ; he persuaded himself he felt highly flattered when she declared she saw in the somewhat plain infant a strong look of himself ; and finally wound himself up to such a pitch of enthusiasm, he actually made an awkward attempt to hold the child, and even impressed a fatherly kiss on its small, mottled, red face.

This was a very happy state of affairs so long as it lasted, but unfortunately a change was soon to be observed. Captain Grant began to wish his wife could find some other subject on which to exercise her conversational powers than “the baby ;” he also commenced to wonder if it was necessary to talk to the child in the senseless and extremely odd style which she and the nurse invariably used when they addressed it. At last he was obliged to confess to himself that, unnatural as it seemed, he occasionally found his boy, in spite of his numerous perfections, a decided bore.

“You see,” he confided to his chum, Jim Reeves, “a fellow gets so deuced sick of hearing nothing but agoo-and-agoo-and-a-bubble-bubble-bubble, which is the way my wife and the nurse always speak to the poor little brat. I can’t get the idiotic rubbish out of my head ; and upon my word, when some of the fellows the other day at the mess were talking of the new regulations that have just come out, and asked me what I thought of them, I was as near as possible making a consummate ass of myself before them all, by answering, ‘Agoo-and-agoo-and-a-bubble-bubble-bubble.’ I assure you I was within an ace of doing so. If I could have a little sensible conversation with my wife when the child had been put to

bed, it would not be so bad, but sleeping or waking 'the baby' occupies all the attention. I am supposed to be violently excited to hear of the 'heavenly, sweet smile' that came over the brat's face when he saw his bottle being brought to him, or that he has managed to crawl three more inches on the ground, or something else that appears to me equally uninteresting. It's really awfully rough on a fellow."

"Rather trying," remarked his friend, sympathetically.

"Trying!" repeated Jack. "That is not the word for it. I declare it makes me so irritable, I sometimes feel inclined to swear at them all round, the baby included."

"Come," answered Jim, reprovingly, "I call that unfair. What! swear at a helpless infant, whose only method of retort and strongest language for some time to come will be 'a-goo' and 'a-bubble,' That is fighting upon unequal terms with a vengeance."

"Oh, if you're going to chaff me, I'll shut up," replied Jack testily. "I only wish you were bothered by the same sort of thing, and then I don't think you would find it so amusing," saying which he turned on his heel and walked away in a huff.

It was in this unsatisfactory frame of mind regarding his firstborn, that Jack proceeded to wend his way home one cold winter's afternoon, a short time before Christmas. He had had a hard day's work, and was looking forward with a feeling of relief to a chat with his wife and a cigar before dinner. True his mind was somewhat disturbed by the thought that it was possible the *tête-à-tête* he anticipated might be broken into by the presence of a third party. But he resolutely shook off this gloomy foreboding, and walked on briskly towards his destination.

On arriving there and hearing his wife's voice somewhere overhead, he called out to her he was home and was going to the smoking-room, where he would be glad of her company till it was time to dress for dinner.

"Very well, dear," she answered brightly; "we'll come in a minute."

"We!" said Jack to himself, "who else is she bringing? Surely it can't be the child. She can never mean to turn this room, as well as every other in the house, into a nursery. Hang it all, that would really be unbearable!"

If, however, he had any doubts on the subject, they were

soon to be dispelled, for he had hardly lit his cigar before his wife made her appearance with the baby in her arms.

"Well," thought Jack resignedly. "I suppose there is nothing for it but to grin and bear it."

"Now, Jack, my dearest," exclaimed his wife gushingly, "I have *such* a piece of news for you. You will *never* guess what it is. It is something almost too delightful for words."

"I also have something to tell you," broke in Jack as his wife paused to take breath, for he felt instinctively that the important news to which his wife referred has something to do with his offspring, and he knew that once that all-absorbing subject was started all other topics of conversation would be inevitably banished for the time being. "I also have something to tell you. I met Chalmers to-day; he is staying here for a few days with his cousin, so I asked him to come and dine with us some time next week, and I think we might invite one or two people to meet him. Now, on what day do you think we had better ask him, and who else shall we have?"

"I will think about it in a minute," answered his little wife eagerly, "but I *must* tell you my news first. Fancy! Baby is getting a tooth, and he is only just four months old!"

"That's capital," said Jack, in a voice intended to express unlimited delight. "There is no doubt that the little fellow is very well on for his age. I should think now he will be trotting about all over the place before we know where we are."

"I don't think I should feel I was doing my duty by him, if I allowed him to do such a thing, even if he could," replied his wife severely. "I don't know if you are particularly anxious to see your child grow up bandy-legged. I can't say I am."

"Ah, yes, I forgot he is rather weak in the legs at present," remarked Jack in a crestfallen voice. "But, May," he continued, more cheerfully, feeling he had done his duty bravely, and nothing more could be expected of him for the present, "what about having Chalmers?"

"Let me see," said May thoughtfully. Then, appealing to the baby, "What does 'ou think, my pretty? Agoo-and-agoo-and-a-bubble-bubble——"

"Come," said Jack, a little impatiently, "try to arrange something, as Chalmers is only here for a few days, and I want you to write to him to-night."

"Must we tink, my sweet?" continued May, apparently oblivious of everything but the existence of her son, and only



half hearing her husband's last remark. "Must we tink, my beauty? Well, then, agoo-and-agoo-and-a bub——"

"For Heaven's sake! try for one moment to attend to what I am saying," said Jack sharply. "I won't trouble you long, and then you will be at liberty to return to your very intellectual conversation with the child."

This time, May quite took in what her husband said, but being annoyed at the way he had spoken she determinedly took no notice of his request, but staring absently into the fire, went on talking to her baby.

"Yes, my own own, does your pretty papa want——"

"Confound it!" exclaimed poor tired Jack angrily, "Do you want to drive me mad with your infernal nonsense? I have never yet been considered pretty, nor have I any wish to be called so at this time of my life. Can't you find a more suitable adjective to apply to me than that?"

"Indeed I can," returned May, losing her temper in her turn; "cross, ill-tempered, rude, unnatural, cruel, and all words which may be applied to you in your present state of mind."

"Well, I am sure I am not surprised," retorted Jack, "the only wonder is, I don't go off my head with hearing the flow of absurd nonsense that seems to me to go on, morning, noon, and night,"

"If you call talking to one's own child, absurd nonsense, I don't," said Maggie, with a great assumption of maternal dignity.

"I must say it never struck me that you intended to talk; I thought it was merely babbling, but of course that may be my ignorance. Perhaps you will be kind enough to enlighten me as to the meaning of that much used word—agoo."

"I shall do no such thing, for I can see you are sneering both at me and my child. I must say for a man who sets up to be a gentleman, it is an extremely curious way of behaving. I confess I should never have thought you capable of speaking to me in the way you have."

"For Goodness' sake, don't preach; I am much too tired to listen."

"Very well, then, if my conversation bores you I most certainly won't remain here any longer," saying which, May walked out of the room very injured, and kissing her son as she went, murmuring tenderly, "at any rate your *mother* loves you, my darling."



In spite however of the satisfaction of having enjoyed the last word, as she carried Baby to the nursery May felt a very queer feeling in her throat, and seemed to have developed a cold in the head, in a remarkably short space or time.

Having left Baby in Nurse's charge, and, much to that worthy woman's astonishment, having parted from him without any of those little endearments she was wont to use to him before doing so, she proceeded straight to her room.

"Well, I never did!" exclaimed Nurse, using that phrase, so much beloved by the lower orders of society, which says so little, but is intended to convey so much. "I never did! To think she should leave her first-born without so much as a parting blessing! Never mind, my sweetie, if your mother forsakes you, you old nurse never will. No, thank 'eaven, I tries to do my dooty by you, my hangel, and nought shall tempt my soul to go astray," and then, having delivered herself of those lofty and truly elevating sentiments, apropos of nothing in particular, she proceeded to undress and bathe the infant, feeling in that virtuous frame of mind we all enjoy when we have been saying anything *very* righteous and moral, whatever our acts may be.

In the meanwhile, the unfortunate object of Nurse's displeasure was sitting in her room, weeping bitterly, all her dignity and temper washed away by her tears. It must be acknowledged that it was some time before May arrived at this state of penitence. At first she could think of nothing but the contempt with which she considered Jack had treated her son; it was this, she told herself, that wounded her, even more than the way he had spoken to her. He had not kissed it when he came in, had expressed no desire to look at its mouth and judge for himself as to whether the tooth would be long in coming (which was what anyone with even a moderate share of fatherly feeling would have done), and, in fact, he had behaved disgracefully.

"Yes, disgracefully," she repeated to herself, as she sat by her window looking out into the winter's gloom, with flushed cheeks and eyes full of angry tears, which she was too proud to let fall, "disgracefully; and so I shall tell him when I see him."

By-and-by, however, her anger began to vanish, and her reflections with regard to Jack were of a milder description. Had she not been a little hasty with him? After all, might he not, perhaps, have reason to complain? Of course it was dif-

ficult to understand anyone being bored by Baby, with his funny little ways and odd little chuckle ; but still, what had her dear old mother said, when she had told her of her plan of bringing him up from his earliest infancy to be a great companion to his father, so that he should learn as soon as possible to enter into all his parent's plans. "Take care, my dear," had been her mother's words, "that you don't give Jack too much of a good thing." Well, she had laughed at the time, but was there not some truth in the advice? Perhaps poor Jack had come home tired, quite worn-out, and in no humor for Baby's company, so no wonder he had been a little impatient. There was no doubt he was really very good-tempered ; he could not have been feeling so bright as usual, or he would not have been annoyed. It was all her fault for teasing him with her nonsense, and she ought to be ashamed of herself. Yes, his health was rapidly being ruined, and it was entirely her own doing ; upon which, having arrived at this conclusion, she could no longer restrain her grief, but burst into a flood of tears.

It was at this stage of the proceedings, and while she was sobbing most vehemently, she felt her husband's strong arms round her, as he said gently :

"Don't cry, little woman. I'm awfully sorry for all I said."

Then, as she looked up at him with a loving though rather watery smile, he continued regretfully : "I can't think what made me behave to you as I did. I know I was an awful brute, but I was not feeling very fit ; not that that is any excuse for the way I spoke to you. But please forgive me, darling."

May's answer to this somewhat incoherent speech was to throw her arms round Jack's neck and give him a good hug, as she said impulsively : "Why, Jack, I want you to forgive me. I am so sorry I lost my temper."

"My dear, you have no reason to apologize," he replied. "I am sure I wonder you did not give it to me hot as I deserved, and it is only because you are the dearest little girl that ever lived that you did not do so. But let us forget the unpleasant business and kiss and be friends," saying which, he suited the action to word, and the reconciliation was complete.

The only thing that now remained to be done was to pay a visit to the cause of all the trouble, and this was not forgotten, as after a minute or two May and Jack proceeded to the nursery, and as Baby happened to be enjoying his bottle, he

chanced to be in a very good temper. Accordingly, when he saw his parents, he condescended to look up for a moment from his meal, and give them a most amiable smile—a little rapid, perhaps, but still very well-meaning, so that nothing was wanting to complete the family felicity.

After this little episode everything went considerably smoother. May realized that a man of thirty and an infant of four months are not very congenial companions, seeing they can hardly be said to have many ideas in common, and that the former decidedly objects to be deserted for the latter; whilst Jack on his part began to comprehend what an unfailing source of interest and amusement a baby is to womankind in general, and its mother in particular, and so learnt to make allowances for the raptures with which his wife viewed their child. Having arrived, therefore, at a better understanding on the subject, it never again caused any trouble, and if you were now to ask his parents about him, they would tell you that since that time Baby has never been anything to them but a bond of union.

## CHARLES READE'S NOVELS.

LIKE many other artists and men of genius, Charles Reade for some time mistook the real bent of his powers. His earliest efforts were dramatic rather than literary, and, indeed, throughout all his life, just as George Eliot wished to be considered a poet, so did his ambition incline to be considered as writer of plays rather than of novels. It was with a play that he first assailed the close theatrical profession at the Haymarket: it was on the production of plays that he wasted the money he made in writing novels; it was at a play-house that he made his last appearance in public before his fatal journey to Cannes. Yet of all his productions in this department only two, "It is Never Too Late to Mend" and "Drink," obtained a real success. The other well-known plays, "The Scuttled Ship," "Masks and Faces," and "Two Loves and a Life," were produced in collaboration with Tom Taylor and Dion Boucicault. The mistake here is common and easily explicable. Charles Reade had many of the instincts of the dramatist; in his presentation of character, in his love of "situation," in his choice of contrasted scenes, in the very rapidity and picturesqueness of his style he showed true dramatic aptitude. But the successful playwright in our age, excels more in scenic construction than in literary workmanship, and has a keen appreciation of the public taste for stage-carpentry rather than the development of character.

As a novelist, Charles Reade is not unworthy to be ranked with Thackeray, and Dickens, and George Eliot. He cannot justly be compared with any of them, for his gifts were dissimilar. He was not an artist like Thackeray; he had not the undeniable genius and prodigality of literary power which is found in Dickens; nor had he the gift of keen analysis or the profound thoughtfulness of George Eliot. Here and there he has the note of Dickens, witness the magnificent funeral scene of Edward Josephs in "Never Too Late to Mend;" but he has more points of comparison with writers for whom he had a great admiration, though they were in many respects his inferiors, such as Wilkie Collins, Bulwer Lytton, and Miss Braddon. With them he shares his love of intricate plots, his diligent study of police intelligence, his portraiture of the con-



ventional villain, his power of exciting interest in his tales ; but he has also gifts which they either do not possess, or possess in inferior forms. Nothing is more remarkable than the laboriousness with which he accumulates his materials. His knowledge is accurate and extensive in such different subjects, for instance, as prison-life, lunatic asylums, criminal procedure, trades unions, theory of banking, the life and learning of the middle ages, contemporary science. As a writer, he possesses *le goût de la réalité*, the instinct of life ; while the animation of his style, the plentiful invention of incidents, the enormous interest in contemporary events, the implicit belief in the virtues of the Anglo-Saxon character, are points which serve to distinguish him among the novelists of his age. His respect for newspapers, as compared with books, his distrust of the ordinary regimen of doctors, his distaste for poets, with the exception of Sir Walter Scott, his love of Cremona fiddles, his fondness for Americans, and his dislike of Carlyle, are *nuances* which affect only his personal character.

Mr. Reade has left a picture of himself in the character of Rolfe in "A Terrible Temptation." His studio at Albert Gate is first described :—

"Between the fireplace and the window, and within a foot or two of the wall, stood a gigantic writing-table, with the signs of hard labor on it, and of severe system ; three plated buckets, each containing three pints full of letters to be answered, other letters to be pasted into a classified guard-book, loose notes to be pasted into various books and classified, five things like bankers' bill-books, into whose several compartments MS. notes and newspaper cuttings were thrown, as a preliminary towards classification in books. Underneath the table was a formidable array of note-books, standing upright and labelled on their backs. There were about twenty large folios of classified facts, ideas, and pictures. Then there was a collection of solid quartos, and of smaller folio guard-books called indexes. There was 'Index rerum et journalium,' 'Index rerum et librorum,' 'Index rerum et hominum,' and a lot more ; indeed so many, that by way of climax, there was a fat folio ledger entitled, 'Index ad Indices.'

"By the side of the table were six or seven thick paste-board cards, each, about the size of a large portfolio, and on these the author's notes and extracts were collected from all his repertories into something like a focus for a present purpose. He was writing a novel based on fact ; facts, incidents, living dialogue, pictures, reflections, situations, were all on these cards to choose from, and arranged in headed columns ; and some portions of the work he was writing on this basis of imagination and drudgery lay on the table in two forms—his own writing and his secretary's copy thereof, the latter corrected for the press. This copy was half margin, and so provided for additions and improvements ; but for one addition there were ten excisions, great and small."

The author himself is then sketched :—

"The author, who had dashed into the garden for a moment's recreation, came to the window. He looked neither like a poet nor a drudge, but a great fat country farmer." (This was a generous libel.) "He was rather tall, smallish head, commonplace features, mild brown eye, not very bright, short beard, and wore a suit of tweed all one color. Such looked the writer of romances founded on fact. He rolled up to the window, for, if he looked like a farmer, he walked like a sailor, and surveyed the two women with a mild, inoffensive, ox-like gaze."

It is necessary to lay stress on this description of the writer, and of his mode of working, for it leads at once to the capital characteristic of Reade. Every artist, if he is worthy of the name, raises a problem in art. In Reade's case, the problem affects the proper balance which should be maintained between "materials" and "imagination." Now here was a man who rejoiced above all in the classification of data, preparatory to his novel-writing. All his principal novels are witnesses to his laboriousness. It is enough to mention the names of "Hard Cash," "It is Never Too Late to Mend," "Put Yourself in His Place," and "The Cloister and the Hearth." Reade himself delivers no uncertain sound in one of his letters addressed to the *Daily Globe*, Toronto. Mr. Goldwin Smith, in true professional style, had criticised Reade's work. This is how Reade answers him:—

"He now carries the same system, the criticaster's, into a matter of more general importance. He says that I found my fictions on fact, and so tell lies: and that the chiefs of fiction did not found fiction on fact, and so only told truths. Now where does he discover that the chiefs of fiction did not found their figments upon facts? It could be proved in a court of law that Shakespeare founded his fiction on fact, wherever he could get hold of fact. Fact is that writer's idol. As for Scott, he is one mass of facts. Daniel Defoe came to his work armed with facts from three main sources and wrote a volume beyond praise. His rich storehouse of rare facts exhausted, he still went on, peopled his island and produced a mediocre volume, such as anybody could write in this age of ours. He tried my anonymuncule's theory: he took the field armed with his imagination only, unadulterated by facts. What was the result? He produced "Robinson Crusoe," which the public read for its title, and promptly damned upon its merits: it has literally disappeared from literature."

The true question is here somewhat obscured, owing to the characteristic impetuosity of Reade's style. There is no real antithesis between writing on a basis of facts and writing by the pure light of the imagination, for no writer, however imaginative, can construct his work in the airy void. But it is a question whether, as in the case of Reade himself, the mass of detail, every part of which can be verified as so much real fact, does not, in some of his books, overpower and overwhelm

the imaginative framework. Compare and contrast "Christie Johnstone," written in 1850 or 1851, with "The Wandering Heir," which was produced in the Christmas number of the *Graphic* in 1872. The first work is written before the enormous appetite for facts and "materials" had overtaken Reade, and while yet his imagination could play round the scenes of his early manhood. In the second work there is chapter and verse for every statement and every incident in the text, as the author is at pains to show in his elaborate defence of himself against the charge of plagiarism from Swift. Is not the first the more successful story from the artistic point of view? And is not "the invention of equal power with the facts," exactly that which is wanting in the second? Doubtless the circulation of "The Wandering Heir" was extensive; but if Charles Reade had not written "Christie Johnstone," and that charming dramatic study, "Peg Woffington," he could not have won the suffrages of the public, which afterwards made his "Wandering Heir" so saleable a commodity.

A better instance is furnished by the well-known "It is Never Too Late to Mend," as compared with "Griffith Gaunt." There can be little doubt that "Griffith Gaunt" is Reade's masterpiece. So, at least, the author thought. "The whole credit and discredit of 'Griffith Gaunt,' my masterpiece, belongs to me, its sole author and original vendor," he says in a letter published in "Readiana." The chief merit of "Griffith Gaunt" lies in the masterly delineation of character in the three chief personages, Catherine Gaunt, Mercy Vint, and the hero himself. Catherine is the embodiment of haughty pride, passionate haste, and religious devotion. Mercy is the incarnation of sweetness, humility, and tenderness. Griffith Gaunt is the brave, lusty English gentleman, mad in anger, mad in jealousy, sensitive, capricious, generous, in turns, at the bidding of his rapid and changing moods. No better Othello in English dress has ever been drawn by a truly Shakespearian artist, in dashes of lurid color with a pen of eloquent fire.

"Never Too Late to Mend" is constructed on a very different plan. No book could well be more interesting, but what one remembers is not the characters, but the incidents; not the story as a whole, but the *purpurei panni*—the graphic scenes and picturesque descriptions. What the author says of "Uncle Tom's Cabin" is eminently true of his own work: "It is written in many places with art; in all with red ink and the biceps muscle." But the book itself falls into two distinct divisions



in accordance with the two different sets of materials, which the author has classified and tabulated for his purpose. The first half is full of the iniquities of the prison system; the second is equally full of Australia. What are the characters compared with the accurate details? What does one care for George Fielding, or Robinson, or Susan, compared with the patches of bright color here and there—Fielding's farewell to his farm, Robinson's curse, the gold diggers listening to the skylark, Joseph's funeral? Mr. Eden himself, serves only as the most elaborate specimen of a character we are always finding in Reade, the hero of unfailing ingenuity and resource. He is a type and not a man, just as the other personages are mere pegs on which are hung the author's delineations of gold-finding in Australia, or his denunciations of the iniquity of prison confinement in separate cells.

Character and construction form the merit of "Griffith Gaunt;" facts, materials, data, are the chief ingredients of the other story. In other words, "Griffith Gaunt," which is not overpowered with materials, is a work of art, while "Never Too Late to Mend" moves heavily under the weight of those facts which its author made it his boast to collect. It is a highly descriptive, intensely interesting, but somewhat amorphous collection of *pièces de conviction*. The same criticism applies to "Put Yourself in His Place." Here the didactic tendency is still more obvious, for Reade's object is to expose the heartless cruelty of Trades' Unions. Characters suffer in consequence, with the possible exception of Dr. Amboyne. But the crucial test is afforded by "The Cloister and the Hearth." If a man can read it through in a sitting, as he can "Griffith Gaunt," if he is carried through it with the same rapt attention, the same suspension of the critical faculty which he experiences when dealing with a work of real artistic construction, then to such a man, at all events, the invention in the book is of equal power with the facts. But if he takes it in such draughts as he is able to stand, being incapable of assimilating it in its entirety, if he feels now and again as if he were laboriously getting up a learned work on the Middle Ages. as is the case, it may be suspected with most readers, then the natural conclusion is that the "Cloister and the Hearth," though a work of great learning and industry, and containing in the fortunes of Gerard and Margaret a love-story of almost idyllic sweetness, is yet not a work of art. "Here," one may say (Mr. Walter Besant has actually said it), "is Erasmus, here



is Froissart, here is Deschamps, here is Coquillart, here is Gringoire, here is Villion, here is Luther ;" and just for that reason it is imperfect. The scholar's learning is staring out of the holes in the artistic armor ; it smells too much of the academic oil.

One of the effects of this partial failure in artistic construction is seen in the monotony of some of Charles Reade's types. The main character in his fiction is always the Resourceful Hero. We can pursue the character through most of Reade's work. He is not, as the author on more than one occasion takes pains to tell us, a Carlylese hero ; he has some regard for human life, and he is usually an affectionate, warm-hearted Christian. But wherever he is, and whatever problem besets him, he is sure to come through it triumphantly. To this class belongs Robert Penfold, in "Foul Play," on his desert island, with the problem before him how to diffuse intelligence from a fixed point over thousands of miles. Henry Little in "Put Yourself in his Place," is of the same fraternity, full of inventive skill in order to wage successful war single-handed against the Trades' Unions. So, too, is Alfred Hardie a hero of resource in "Hard Cash," a young man of culture and intelligence, with "an indefinable air of Eton and Oxford about him," condemned to struggle against the iniquities of a private lunatic asylum and an unnatural father. Robinson, the converted convict in "Never Too Late to Mend," shows similar skill and inventiveness in conquering difficulties, whether the difficulties are the material hardships of Australian gold-digging, or the more impalpable temptations of his own past life. To these may perhaps be added Gerard and Denys, in "The Cloister and the Hearth," and Mr. Rolfe in the "Terrible Temptation."

Side by side with the resourceful hero is generally found the aiding and abetting Doctor. Ordinary doctors are not, as a rule, very civilly treated by Charles Reade. He calls them "the most venal class upon the earth," in the pages of "Hard Cash," and Doctors Wycherley and Osmond, Mosely and Donkyn are held up to public reprobation as grasping, incompetent, and gullible. But to serve as contrast to the commonplace doctor, appears the rare and exceptional doctor, who is a judge of character as well as of drugs, and who has a decided objection to blood-letting. Thus Doctor Suaby is the best friend of Sir Charles Basset in a "Terrible Temptation ;" Dr. Amboyne is always at the right hand of Henry Little in "Put

Yourself in His Place," and Dr. Aberford in "Christie Johnstone" is the only man who sees through the jaded epicurean, Lord Ipsden. But the best representative of the class is Dr. Sampson in "Hard Cash," who is so staunch an ally to Alfred Hardie. The scenes in which Dr. Sampson figures are some of the best which Reade ever wrote, just as the crotchety, warm-hearted, rough-tongued old quack, with his everlasting "Chronothairmal thereby," is the one of the few genuinely humorous characters in Reade's gallery of portraits.

Mr. John Coleman has told us that Dr. Sampson was Dr. Dickson, and that the novelist had, in his usual precise way, classified and tabulated the characteristics of his friend under the head of Dickybirdiana. Tabulation is here, as elsewhere, Reade's invincible hobby. When he was at Oxford, he sometimes used to busy himself with the intricacies of Oxford aquatics, going so far as to classify the various expressions used by boating men, and even the terms of endearment with which they used to welcome their athletic friends. The result was the scene at Henley Regatta in which Edward Dodd and Alfred Hardie appear. Naturally enough, this mechanical way of getting up a subject sometimes played the author false. It is incongruous enough to boating men to find Mr. Edward Dodd, who ought to have been in hard training, smoking a cigar on Henley Bridge, just as the same authorities would hardly endorse the description given by Reade of the Oxford stroke ("the true Oxford stroke is slow in the water but swift in the air"), which he communicated to the *Observer* in 1872. Nor is it quite comprehensible why Mr. Angelo, the athletic curate in "A Terrible Temptation," should be represented as having won "the 200 yards race" at Oxford.

The villain is an equally typical personage in these novels. He always employs the same arts. He intercepts letters at the post office, he tampers with corruptible officials, and hires unconscientious villains. This is the procedure of Meadows in "Never Too Late to Mend;" of Coventry in "Put Yourself in His Place;" of Woodlaw in "Foul Play," of Richard Basset in "A Terrible Temptation;" of Richard Hardie in "Hard Cash." Pomander in "Peg Woffington," Richard Annesley in "The Wandering Heir," and Ghysbrecht van Swieten in "The Cloister and the Hearth," belong to the same conventional category. In these matters, some of Charles Reade's affinity to transpontine melodrama appears. There must be a villain on the stage to counterbalance the innocent charms of the heroine

and to bring out in clearer relief the many virtues of the hero. He must wind in and out of the various scenes for four acts in order to be brought up for condign punishment in the fifth, and receive the indignant hisses of the gallery when he is called before the curtain. Moreover, Charles Reade's villain has, usually, a feebler villain behind him to serve as catspaw. Thus Meadows employs the base arts of Crawley, and Hardie and Skinner are first villain and second villain respectively in "Hard Cash." The catspaw of Woodlaw is Wylie, the creature of Richard Basset is the unscrupulous attorney, Wheeler.

The parson is another favorite character. The highest representative of this class is Francis Eden in "Never Too Late to Mend." He is the ideally good man, who unites in a marvelous compound the subtlety of the resourceful hero and the sweet reasonableness of the saint. He is never at fault in the judgment of character, never devoid of plans in the hour of danger; buffeted by adverse fate, he always proves ultimately superior to circumstances, and leaves behind him a rich heritage of noble acts, and grateful and devoted friends. So too is Robert Penfold, at once a martyr and a saint, only inferior to Francis Eden, in that he is a victim to the delicious weaknesses of love-making. Sometimes the contrast is indicated between the true priest and the hollow semblance clad in priestly guise. Thus Eden, the saint, is contrasted with Mr. Jones, the essence of commonplace. Brother Francis, the genuine, the practical, the true-hearted, is contrasted with Brother Leonard, the emotional, the weak-kneed; while the counterpart of the good-looking Angelo, who is so much in love with Lady Bassett, is furnished by Rolfe, who for the nonce discharges ecclesiastical functions.

Charles Reade's female characters require a more careful scrutiny. It is quite clear, from numerous references in his novels, that he thought he was giving a better representation of female character than his contemporaries, and we know from other sources that he employed his usual system of tabulation with such zeal in this case that he even classified and arranged the ejaculations which women use. One of his admirers has gone so far as to say that he invented the "true woman;" at all events, he arranged two parallel columns of facts, labelled respectively, "*Fœmina Ficta*," and "*Fœmina Vera*." Nor is it untrue to add that among Charles Reade's gallery of portraits, some of the best and most life-like are his women.



His female characters run mainly into three types. There is the strong natural girl, like Christie Johnstone, or Jael Dence, or Philipa Chester, or Mary Wells. There is the class of domestic innocents—sweet, simple, lovable girls, without much strength, except when love transports them out of themselves, like Julia Dodd, Grace Carden, Susan Merton, Margaret Brandt, Mercy Vint, Mabel Vane, and Lady Bassett. The third type is the passionate woman, the courtesan actual or potential, sometimes dangerous, cruel, and revengeful to the bitter end, like Mrs. Ryder and Mrs. Archbold, sometimes reformed and helpful, like Rhoda Somerset. Of these classes, the third is most conventional and stagey. According to Reade's own statement, he copied Rhoda Somerset from the pages of the *Times*. "It was you," he says to the editor ("Readiana," p. 322), "who first introduced her, ponies and all, to the public in an admirable letter, headed 'Anonyma.'" But in the novel she plays no distinguished part, and is converted to a moral life with a rapidity and a nonchalance which reminds one of the "Formosa" in Dion Boucicault's laughable play. Mrs. Archbold and Mrs. Ryder are both from the same mould, easily enamoured, madly passionate, bitterly revengeful, fulfilling the same rôle as the wicked washerwoman who works such woe to Gervaise and the mason in Reade's dramatic version of "L'Assommoir." Far better and more life-like are those heroines whom Reade loves to trace, the natural, strong-minded, warm-hearted characters, fresh with the bloom of wild roses, and with the scent of new-mown hay. These are often put into contrast with the artificial ladies of polished life, very much to the disadvantage of the latter. Thus Jael Dence is placed side by side with Grace Carden, Christie Johnstone with Lady Barbara Sinclair, Mercy Vint with Catherine Gaunt, Mary Wells with Lady Bassett. So, too, the process of conversion from artificiality to naturalness is exhibited in a single character, when Helen Rolleston, in "Foul Play," is changed into a true-hearted girl by the beneficial discipline of an island life, and Peg Woffington leaves the mimic passions of the stage owing to the influence of Mabel Vane. The simple innocents like Susan Merton and Grace Carden and Julia Dodd are less attractive, perhaps because the purity of their hearts renders characterization almost impossible. But if one has to select two heroines from Charles Reade's gallery, let the verdict be given for Christie Johnstone and Margaret Brandt. While the latter represents the class of *ingénues* at the



very best, the former is the truest girl whom Reade has drawn. If all else be forgotten, the strong and tender fisher-girl of New-haven, with her Dutch cap, and cotton jacket, and kilted petticoat, white as milk and supple as a young ash-tree, lingers in the memory like a breath from her own native sea.

It is necessary to remember how many different subjects Charles Reade has illustrated in order to appreciate the versatility of his genius and the extent of his studies. To understand his method the reader can consult the preface to "*Hard Cash*," or to "*A Simpleton*," or go through the formidable list of authorities quoted in the Appendix to "*The Wandering Heir*." He studied Blue-books and journals with the unremitting laboriousness and attention which a student gives to some recondite subject of research. Newspapers, above all, suggested topics to his pen.

"For eighteen years," he says to the editor of the *Times*, "the journal you conduct so ably has been my preceptor and the main source of my works; at all events of the most approved. A noble passage in the *Times* of September 7 or 8, 1853, touched my heart, inflamed my imagination, and was the germ of my first important work, 'It is Never Too Late to Mend.' Some years later you put forth an able and eloquent leader on private asylums, and detailed the sufferings there inflicted on persons known to you. This took root in me, and brought forth its fruit in the second volume of '*Hard Cash*.' Later still your hearty and able but temperate leaders on trades unions and trade outrages incited me to an ample study of that great subject, so fit for fiction of the higher order, though not adapted to the narrow minds of bread-and-butter misses, nor of the critics who echo those young ladies' idea of fiction and its limits, and thus '*Put Yourself in His Place*' was written. Of '*A Terrible Temptation*' the leading idea came to me from the *Times*, viz., from the report of a certain trial, with the comments of counsel, and the remarkable judgment delivered by Mr. Justice Byles."

A man who worked in a fashion so characteristic, as he himself says of Shakespeare and Daniel Defoe and Sir Walter Scott, would be sure, sooner or later, to have his authorities discovered, and to be thereupon accused of plagiarism. It is quite true that the leading ideas of his novels were borrowed from alien sources, sometimes from his promiscuous reading in the French drama. Thus "*Hard Cash*" appears to owe something to Macquet's "*Le Pauvre de Paris*," and "*A Double Marriage*" to the same author's "*Château Grantier*." "*Foul Play*" has some similarity to "*Le Portefeuille Rouge*," and the play of "*Drink*" was an acknowledged adaption from Zola's "*L'Assommoir*." But originality is a hard matter to define, and is at best a doubtful virtue. The charge of plagiar-

ism Reade meets in the Preface to "A Simpleton" in the following characteristic fashion :—

"It has lately been objected to me, in studiously courteous terms, of course, that I borrow from other books, and am a Plagiarist. To this I reply that I borrow facts from every accessible source, and am not a Plagiarist. The Plagiarist is one who borrows from a homogeneous work ; for such, a man borrows not ideas only, but their treatment. He who borrows only from heterogeneous works is not a Plagiarist. All fiction worth a button is founded on facts ; and it does not matter one straw whether the facts are taken from personal experience, hearsay, or printed books ; only those books must not be works of fiction. To those who have science enough to appreciate the above distinction, I am very willing to admit that in all my tales I use a vast deal of heterogeneous material, which in a life of study I have gathered from men, journals, blue-books, histories, biographies, law reports, &c. I rarely write a novel without milking about two hundred heterogeneous cows into my pail, and "A Simpleton" is no exception to my general method : that method is the true method and the best, and if on that method I do not write prime novels, it is the fault of the man, and not of the method."

Then follow the various sources from which the different parts of the novel were derived, the South African incidents alone being indebted to thirteen different authorities. If we remember that this diligence has been bestowed mainly on subjects of deep national importance, Charles Reade must be considered a public benefactor, even if he had not written a line of romance. Only the other day the *Lancet* and the *British Medical Journal* were bringing against private lunatic asylums the very accusations which were urged in "Hard Cash" and "A Terrible Temptation," that they did not attempt to cure an insane patient, and that it was very difficult to procure the release of a sane one. "I am a painstaking man," Reade says very truly of himself, "and I owe my success to it."

Another sentence of personal criticism is equally just, and serves to illustrate, not only his own nature, but also the merits and defects of his literary style. "I bear an indifferent character," he says to the editor of a Toronto paper, "for temper and moderation." Anyone who reads through the correspondence published in the volume entitled "Readiana," can bear amply testimony to the truth of this assertion. And if stress be laid on the least successful points in his style of narrative, it too will be found wanting in temper and moderation. It is too rapid, too terse, too jerky, but for these very reasons it sometimes is able to call up a picture in a series of lightning flashes. Moreover, it has the merits of constant animation and liveliness, and, though often wanting in polish, it, like the

best of Reade's characters, is racy of the soil. Especially when dealing with the sea it gains force, picturesqueness, and variety, and no better sample can be found than the gallant fight with the pirate ships with which Dodd's career opens in "Hard Cash." But for pure, simple pathos, there is nothing truer and finer than the scene in "Never Too Late to Mend," where the gold-diggers on Sunday morning gathered round to listen to the skylark.

"Like most singers, he kept them waiting a bit. But, at last, just at noon, when the mistress of the house had warranted him to sing, the little feathered exile began as it were to tune his pipes. The savage men gathered round his cage that moment, and amidst a dead stillness the bird uttered some very uncertain chirps, but after a while he seemed to revive his memories, and call his ancient cadences back to him one by one, and string them *sotto voce*.

"And then the same sun that had warmed his little heart at home came glowing down on him here, and he gave music back for it more and more, till at last, amidst breathless silence and glistening eyes of the rough diggers hanging on his voice, out burst in that distant land his English song.

"It swelled his little throat and gushed from him with thrilling force and plenty, and every time he checked his song to think of his theme, the green meadows, the quiet stealing streams, the clover he first soared from and the spring he sang so well, a loud sigh from many a rough bosom, many a wild and wicked heart, told how tight the listeners had held their breath to hear him; and when he swelled with song again, and poured with all his soul the green meadows, the quiet brooks, the honey clover and the English spring, the rugged mouths opened and so stayed, and the shaggy lips trembled, and more than one drop trickled from fierce unbridled hearts down bronzed and rugged cheeks.

"Dulce domum.

"And these shaggy men, full of oaths and strife and cupidity, had once been white-headed boys and had strolled about the English fields with little sisters and little brothers, and seen the lark rise and heard him sing this very song. The little playmates lay in the churchyard, and they were full of oaths and drink and lust and remorse, but no note was changed in this immortal song. And so for a moment or two years of vice rolled away like a dark cloud from the memory, and the past shone out in the song-shine; they came back, bright as the immortal notes that lighted them, those faded pictures, and those fleeting days; the cottage, the old mother's tears, when he left her without one grain of sorrow; the village-church and its simple chimes; the clover-field hard by in which he lay and gambolled, while the lark praised God overhead; the chubby playmates that never grew to be wicked, the sweet hours of youth—and innocence—and home."

A strain of health and manliness runs through all Reade's work: it is not all meat for babes, but it is always on the side of morality. No more unfair charge was ever uttered than that which denounced "Griffith Gaunt" and a "Terrible Temptation" as indecent books. Reade is never afraid to handle themes which to delicate susceptibilities may savor of



indelicacy ; but it is only the prurient prude who could condemn his manner of treatment. For his own part, he is an enthusiastic defender of Faith and Religion : the "last words to mankind" which he had placed on his tombstone breathe a spirit of the simplest Christianity. A vigorous writer, a clear-headed thinker, untroubled by metaphysical mirage or philosophic doubt, with a rare eye for picturesque effects and a rare appreciation for the subtler details of character, Charles Reade was almost, if not quite, a genius, and only just failed in being an artist. By the side of his beloved friend, Mrs. Seymour, in Willesden Churchyard, lie his mortal remains. His immortal part lives and will live in the memory of English-speaking races.



# TWO TRUANTS.

## CHAPTER I.

### TWO IN A TRAIN.

IT is a touching spectacle for the outside public when a young lady, whom circumstances oblige to take a railway journey alone, is seen off at the station by her friends. To the object of all this solicitude it appears sometimes excessive. So, at least, thought Dorothea, habitually known as Dolly Thompson, fifth daughter of the Dean of St. Martin's, as the train that was to carry her to London in a couple of hours drew up at the platform, where she stood amid a body-guard composed of her mother, three sisters and a servant. Dolly was too well brought up to protest, but thought is free.

"Im twenty-one," she mused, disconsolate, "so no infant, even in law; neither blind nor lame, nor an idiot nor an invalid. Were I all four, could further precautions have to be taken on my behalf?"

One first-class compartment after another was inspected, and rejected as imposing society possibly unsafe. Here was a masculine passenger who looked too bluff; here was another who looked too bland. Wolves in sheep's clothing seemed everywhere. The ladies' carriage was declined by Dolly herself as too crowded, and with a decision that carried the day. "Why not this empty *coupé*?" she pleaded, forgetting that the train stopped once *en route*, and that some redoubtable misdemewant—lunatic or murderer—was presumably waiting to get in at this fatal intermediate station. Mrs. Thompson, in real distress, appealed to the guard, who responded by opening the door of a compartment she had overlooked—with a single occupant, and that feminine, a young lady, he consolingly said, bound also for London.

The unchaperoned one was swiftly subjected to a severe maternal scrutiny. A nice, quiet-looking girl, but very prettily dressed, which, together with her youth and pretty face, went against her.

"Dear Dolly, I am afraid you must get in here," sighed Mrs. Thompson, uncomforted. "She's a lady, I *think*."

"Bless me, mother, what else should she be?—a bandit in

petticoats?" returned Dolly vivaciously. "Do let me get in somewhere, or I shall be left behind."

Even a mother's anxious imagination could ill conjure up traces of an escaped criminal in the gentle creature to whose companionship the precious Dolly was reluctantly consigned. But only an escort of angels would have set the parent heart quite at ease.

The guard was fee'd, and he solemnly promised to look in upon every opportunity to make sure the young lady had not fallen out of the window or come to any harm. Wraps and dust-cloaks were heaped upon her; she was implored not to lose her ticket, and supplied with an illustrated paper, lest she should perish of ennui on the way.

"The Phippses will meet you on the platform at the terminus," her mother reminded her for the fiftieth time. "You are *quite* sure you know the Doctor when you see him? He has not seen you since you were a child of six."

"I've seen him but once that I remember, and that since he was sixty," replied Dolly calmly; "but I think if he were to come as a child of six I should know him at once. He has a nose of a thousand."

"You will post a card at once to let us know you are safe?"

"Telegraph, if you'll give me the shilling. Hands off, mother, or you'll be hurt," as the whistle sounded and the train began to move.

"That's over," sighed Dolly thankfully, settling herself in a corner. "If kindness could kill me, I had died young."

But even now, back came the servant, running, with injunctions to remind her of the number of the van where, at the terminus, she would find her luggage. Lastly, the guard put in his head protectively, as much as to say, "I am here. Don't you be afraid."

Afraid! Poor Dolly!

Not a passenger in the train, she said to herself crossly, but must be aware what a helpless piece of goods was being bandied about. Glancing across at her fellow-traveler, she thought she caught a half-smile, which annoyed her inexpressibly. This girl looked younger than herself: seventeen at most. There was something in her appearance that attracted Dolly from the first moment—the attraction of nice qualities that obligingly consent to come out without coaxing, and not to disguise themselves under some prickly husk.

"She doesn't glare at me, as English travelers generally

glare at strangers—as mother glared at her, for instance,” thought Dolly ; and almost involuntarily a half-laughing, half-mournful apology escaped her lips : “ It’s not my fault that they always will make such a fuss. I call it simply ridiculous.”

“ Don’t you like being taken care of ? ” asked her companion.

“ They overdo it,” said Dolly decidedly, “ when they wrap you in cotton-wool and seal you up. I’m not such a tender blossom as that. As if I minded the train. I love traveling. Do not you ? ”

“ We overdo it,” answered the other diffidently, as though in apology for implied want of sympathy. “ We seem to live on the move, like gipsies.”

“ Gipsies ! O, delicious ! ” sighed Dolly enviously.

“ I can tell you it’s not from choice or for pleasure that we wander,” was the quick rejoinder. “ But my parents belong to the stage, and their profession obliges us to travel about the country a good deal—at home everywhere ; that is to say, without a home anywhere.”

“ On the stage ? O, how heavenly ? ” whispered Dolly to herself. Her gaze at her opposite neighbor deepened to intensity, interest became enthusiastic, and she added aloud, with a mixture of eager curiosity and profound reverence : “ And you, might I venture to ask—are you an actress yourself ? ”

“ Not yet ; I only left school last Easter. But I have two sisters on the stage, and in a few months I am to come out myself.”

“ How divine ! ” was Dolly’s heartfelt comment.

The future *débutante* stared at her with wonder apparently illimitable.

“ I beg your pardon,” she said, doubting if she could have heard aright.

How indeed should May Black, born with fixed but un-theatrical instincts into a theatrical sphere, and in whom familiarity with the profession had bred contempt chiefly, until she had grown to regard their hereditary vocation as the one flaw in the happiness of an otherwise perfectly happy family—how should she comprehend that to Dolly Thompson the stage was the fairyland of life, a realm whereinto the glimpses snatched were pleasures past compare, the relish for them heightened in her case by their extreme rarity ? At the Deanery the theatre, though not condemned root and branches, was held in low esteem, shunned and disparaged ; and the taste



for it in the rising generation actively discouraged, but to worse than no purpose in this instance.

Its peculiar and indefinable fascination, imperceptible to certain natures, such as May Black's, absolutely irresistible to minds of another stamp, found in Dolly Thompson a remarkably receptive subject. What a novel delight was hers at this moment! *Tête-à-tête* for two hours with an actor's daughter—an actress that was to be! Blessings on the mother who had put her into this carriage, inadvertently conferring on her such a partner for her journey!

"Come out on the stage! how divine!" she repeated.

"Divine? I detest it," returned the pretty child opposite, distinctly. "But I musn't be idle, and there's nothing else for me to do."

"Heaven sends almonds to those who have no teeth," thought Miss Thompson; then proceeded aloud: "As for me, I love everything that is in the remotest degree connected with the stage. A circus is better than nothing, and they used to let us go there for a treat when we were little. I think the smell of the gas-lamps is good, when they are foot-lamps. A drop scene, a stage landscape by Beverly and Telbin, delights me more than a Burlington House full of Old Masters; and Howell & James's shop-window is as nothing to me by way of attraction compared to the places where they sell spangles and gold and silver tissue, and masks and stage jewelry. I envy the call-boy, the fairy who jumps out of a drum at a pantomime, the walking ladies in flabby satin. I've only been to the play half a dozen times in my life; but there's been not a joy in it up till now to compare with those six occasions, and what I live for at present is to add to their number."

"Well, what should prevent you?" inquired the listener placidly.

"Destiny," said Dolly pathetically, shaking her head, "that made my father a dignitary of the Church; my brothers, uncles, cousins, parsons to a man. My natural protectors won't go to a play unless it comes off in a room, nor enter a playhouse unless it is a temperance meeting that's to come off there."

"Why not?" asked May Black innocently.

"They have, or think they have, their reasons," replied Dolly discreetly; "but the root of the matter is that they don't care a scrap for it, and they think me a maniac because my ruling passion lies that way. Why wasn't I born in the pro-



fession, like you, or at least under conditions that would allow me to see as much as I like of what I love best in the world—of the play?"

May Black's large childlike blue eyes were still fixed on the speaker in wonder, and with dawning interest, as on an original phenomenon, and she answered, "And what I love best is to get away from it all—to forget that there are such things as costumes, make-ups, rehearsals, playbooks, playbills, supers, and stars. So would you, if you heard nothing else talked of at home from morning till night."

"You would be glad enough to be reminded of them," retorted Dolly feelingly, "if you lived where I live—in a charmed clerical circle, without any stars, unless you count the bishops."

"I never saw a bishop out of church," observed May respectfully, whom the suggested idea that that hierarchy were not part of the fixtures of the sacred edifice, like pews and pulpit, seemed to strike as new.

"Well, they're as plentiful as blackberries with us," said Dolly, disrespectfully. "It's the dread of my life that my father will be made one, sooner or later, which would reduce my theatre-goings to a minimum, I foresee. A bishop may be quite a shining light in his way, but you can't talk to him, or even, as a rule, to his chaplains, about the Gaiety and Miss Farren's dancing. I suppose I shall meet the whole Bench this afternoon."

"Bench?"

"Bench of Bishops," explained Dolly. "I'm going to a garden-party at Lambeth—the Archbishop's, you know."

"Oh, yes, I know!" Miss Black responded eagerly. "I've seen it from the steamboats. Are not the grounds most beautiful—full of flowers, like the country?"

"I don't know, I'm sure; I never saw them," said Dolly unconcernedly; "and I daresay it will rain."

"If it did, you would not mind; there is the palace and the pictures, and the Lollards' Tower, and the prison, and the rings. I would give anything to be you. How strange that you should not care!"

"Yes, there's all that," Dolly admitted unenthusiastically. "Yet I really don't know what I'm going for, unless it is to oblige my people. The Archbishop asked the family; but as the rest are tied down at home, and I chanced to be going up

on a visit to my aunt in Westbourne Terrace, they settled for me to go to represent the tribe."

"The Archbishop! I caught a glimpse of him once at St. Paul's," observed Miss Black. "I thought he was quite the kindest and the finest-looking old man I ever saw."

"Pretty well, for past eighty, as he is now," said Dolly kindly; "but as for his party, I don't expect to enjoy myself there one bit. I don't know a soul in London, scarcely, in the first place, and I'm going with an old Scotch clergyman and his wife, who won't know anybody either. I shall talk to them of school-treats, district-visiting, charity concerts, and missions, like an adept; or, at the best and brightest, of lawn-tennis and the weather, for variety. But all the while I shall be wishing myself at the morning performance at one of the theatres. It's not the sort of party that amuses me much, you know."

"Would this sort of a party strike you as more amusing, I wonder?" said her companion, smiling, taking from her pocket a card of delicate texture and tint, and handing it to Miss Thompson, who gazed at it long and increasingly lovingly.

It was a fanciful note of invitation, in picture-writing, designed by a celebrated artist in caricature—an arrangement in China tea-services, champagne-bottles, and profiles of eminent players. Its contents were to signify that Miss Laurie Smart, the manager of the Nonpareil Theatre, requested the pleasure of the Misses Blacks company at a *conversazione* on the stage that afternoon at three o'clock, and that several dramatic artists of note had volunteered to contribute their talents, as well as their company, to the entertainment. In an instant Dolly's eyes had singled out the most famous men.

"Rantwell!" she uttered in awe. "Will *he*—will he be there?"

"Certainly he will. He has promised to recite."

"And Slingsby, and the Smith Kembles, and the Kean Joneses! O, you are lucky! I never saw an actor off the stage. I would give the world to stand in your place."

"What a pity you cannot! rejoined the other simply. "Why, I meant not to go. I was thinking how I could shirk."

"Give up *that*!" cried Dolly, staggered, aghast at the bare suggestion.

"My sisters are detained at the seaside for a benefit, and my parents, whom I am on my way to join in town, are too busy.

I should have to go by myself. I am a stranger in London, like you. The party will be made up of London theatrical people, of whom I scarcely know more as yet than do you. Anybody—you yourself—might go in my place, I believe, and no one be the wiser."

Dolly's eyes glistened oddly as she glanced from the pictorial card of invitation to the speaker's ingenuous countenance. She said,

"Then you would have to go to Lambeth in *my* place. I *know* you might, and no one be any the wiser."

"What, not your friends, who are to accompany you?"

"They aren't my friends—there's the point," laughed Dolly; "it's an old Scotch clerical friend of papa's, whom he met in town yesterday, and who, with his wife, whom I never even saw, offered to meet me at the station and chaperone me this afternoon, as my aunt, who should have taken me, is laid up with a cold. Dr. Phipps doesn't know me from the Witch of Endor. But I've seen him, and he's unmistakable. O Miss Black,"—she burst out, in a tone of fervid and desperate longing, "if only we two could change places for two hours! And we could, as you said just now. Would it be very wrong, I wonder? At the worst, it could hurt nobody but ourselves."

Mary Black laughed at the jest, for Dolly was jesting, of course.

"What sort of a gathering is this at the Nonpareil?" pursued the latter inquisitively, still unable to lift her eyes from the fatal card.

"A *matinée d'invitation* they call it."

"Not like a public entertainment?"

"Nor yet like a private party, exactly. O, as to that, it could make no difference if you or some one else went in my stead."

"Do you mean it?"

"You might just go in, listen to the music and recitations, and come away when you are tired. Mr. Smart knows none of us, except my father, professionally. He would never find out we had given away the ticket, and if he did he would not care. But your garden-party is, of course, quite a different thing—a gathering of private friends."

Dolly shook her head laughingly. "Not exactly; I can tell you what garden-parties are sometimes—a great drag-net to gather in all sorts and conditions. It must be, or the Phippses wouldn't be asked. Among a hundred young ladies very im-



perfectly known to the Primate and his family, one entirely unknown as I should be—or you, if you went as my deputy—would have a very fair chance of escaping observation. And there are such a lot of us! A new Miss Thompson suggests nothing particular to anybody. Only our near relations and bosom friends ever pretend to be quite clear about which of us is which, when they see a detachment. You would simply go in as I should—know nobody in the room, talk to Mrs. Phipps, drink a cup of tea, and then go. You'd be very dull!"

"Dull? O, never!" exclaimed the girl, with animation. "It would all be so new. But suppose the Archbishop should speak to me—what should I do?"

"Try not to faint," said Dolly, as gravely as she could. "Answer him to the best of your ability. His questions won't be abstruse. Pretend to be shy, and he won't persevere. I don't suppose Rantwell would speak to me. If he did, I'd find a way out of it, without betraying my untheatrical origin. Trust to inspiration. I've the greatest confidence in inspiration."

"Why, but really, Miss Thompson," exclaimed the bewildered May, half carried out of herself by the impetuosity and volubility of her companion, "you talk as if we were actually going to—"

"I will if you will," struck in Dolly boldly. O, the fun of it, the fun of it, Miss Black! Consider how strangely everything has conspired together to make possible such a venture. It's an extraordinary chance—a stroke of genius on the part of Fate. We should deserve no more luck in our lives if we let slip so precious, so unique an opportunity."

The train had passed the intermediate station, where, owing to the rigid supervision exercised by the guard, no third person was allowed to intrude upon the girls. Their dialogue, safe now from premature interruption, was continued all the way up to town without a break, and with ever-increasing spirit and fluent eloquence on the part of Miss Thompson. She had a strong will and a pleasant manner, which is as much as to say that she was born to lead. May Black, timid and shrinking by temperament, was half-subjugated by the spell of her companion's energy, which inspired a sort of blind confidence, while at the same time she dazzled and amused by her merry chatter, her convincing logic, half jest, half earnest, becoming warmer as she penetrated herself by her own oratory.

"Only think," she pleaded emphatically, "what mortifica-



tions we poor superfluous girls suffer from society, who won't allow us a personal existence. I mean what I say. I'm one of a sisterhood of six—known to most people only by my number in the gang, like a prisoner. Is it not the same with you?" pointing to the card. "See there: 'The Misses Black,' jumbled together like bales of cotton or wool. Suppose you were three brothers: would Mr. Smart invite you like that, in a lump—the Messrs. Black—and if he did, how would you like it? As a rule it's a hard trial to be denied the right to an individual self, and openly treated as a nonentity. For once, by some miracle, it is offered us to turn our disadvantage to account, and be revenged on society. Let us do so. Tell me why we should not."

May, suddenly letting go the general question, named one or two practical difficulties that sounded insuperable.

"I thought of all that the first moment," rejoined Dolly promptly. "Now listen just for two minutes, Miss Black, and I'll tell you what—"

What she told her will presently appear. May listened, and was listening still, when, half-way across the Thames, the train halted for the collection of tickets, and the paternally-minded guard, for the last time, looked in to certify that the parties intrusted to his care had come to no mischief.

## CHAPTER II.

### A FAIR PRETENDER.

OLD Dr. Phipps had arrived on the platform in a terrible flutter. He would sooner have undertaken to address the assembled Houses of Convocation than to fish for a strange young lady in a crowd. And his wife had treacherously refused to help him, loth to leave the carriage lest she should soil her gown. Dolly saw him go meandering around, his short-sighted eyes seeking in the lineaments of each fat matron and elderly spinster for signs of a possible daughter of his old friend the Dean. All at once, by a special Providence, as it seemed to him, a strong clear voice struck in, close to his elbow.

"*Au revoir*, then, Miss Thompson, at Whiteley's. I will wait for you there."

Turning to the young girl thus addressed, the Doctor took off his hat, and accosted her with the utmost politeness that is consistent with the utmost awkwardness.

"Miss Thompson, I think?" extending his hand to May

Black, who took it involuntarily, with an instinctive movement of civility. "Have you any luggage with you?" proceeded the Doctor. "None? Then allow me." But as, instead of accepting his proffered arm, the young lady doubtfully had half turned from him to another young lady by her side, he added gallantly, "Pray, can I be of any assistance to your friend?"

"None whatever, thank you very much," Dolly gave decided answer for herself.

A whispered parting word or two, a few hurried glances passed between the traveling companions, then the one had moved out of the narrow range of the Doctor's vision, and he was left facing the other, of whom, blind though he was, he had descried that she was a pretty little girl, and dressed in blue.

And his wife had encouragingly assured him that he would never find Miss Thompson. Proud of the promptitude with which he had falsified her predictions, he hastened off with his charge to the brougham in waiting outside the station.

Here, at the carriage-door, May hung back a brief instant, irresolute, then passed the Rubicon and got in, whilst Dr. Phipps, raising his voice so as to make himself audible to the porters and passengers round about, named his episcopal destination to the driver solemnly, stepped in, and the party drove off.

May Black found herself seated by an elderly lady in a purplish shot-silk dress, who, shaking hands with her effusively, was inquiring after her dear, dear father.

"He is remarkably well, thank you," replied the girl, without much embarrassment; for, after all, it was quite true.

"Not overworking himself, I trust," urged the Doctor. "It must be terribly fatiguing exerting his voice daily in so vast an area."

"He is accustomed to that," May let fall pensively.

The new Crown Theatre, in which Mr. Black, a meritorious actor, and still more meritorious country manager, had been performing nightly with his company for the last month, was, in fact, one of the largest in the kingdom.

"You are his living image," said Mrs. Phipps. "Is she not, James?"

"The likeness is striking," he rejoined, adding, with one of those wild lapses of conscience into which the best of men are sometimes betrayed, "I distinguished her by it at once."

But both the Doctor and his venerable helpmate were almost beside their wits with nervous fidget. The quietest couple were they, from the remotest of country parsonages, and the bustle of London, the excitement of their approaching appearance in London society, had strangely upset both man and wife. They had not been out to a party for ten years. She was so preoccupied with her gown, which was shut in, and her bonnet, that would not stay on; he with unnecessary fears that the driver was losing the way; that they had very little mind left to bestow on their *protégée*, whose perturbation, if less manifest, was at least as profound. Miss Black shrank appalled from the position into which she had suffered herself to be thrust by the mad freak of a chance acquaintance. The idea had been laughable, the reality was past a joke. It comforted her conscience that she felt none of the satisfaction of a successful interloper in quest of amusement and advantage, but rather like a devoted being who has heroically changed places with a prisoner, and must dare all the unpleasant consequence—a victim going to sacrifice. Who or what would deliver her from the obligation of playing out this perilous prank? O, that the brougham might be overturned, Dr. Phipps be taken suddenly ill, the driver irretrievably lose his way! Something must happen to cut short this nightmare of an adventure. Willingly, joyfully, would she have denounced herself to her present companions, got out of the brougham, and wished them good-morning, but that would have been perfidious to Miss Thompson. Inexorably the wheels of the chariot rolled on, Dr. and Mrs. Phipps remarking by turns, every now and then, what a delightful day it was, which, as both windows were kept carefully closed, seemed to May Black a matter of unimportance. When the Thames was crossed, and they neared the picturesque range of buildings on whose beauty she had commented to Miss Thompson, sheer desperation forced her to collect her senses and nerve herself for the pending ordeal.

“No stage-fright could be so bad as this,” she thought, with grim self-mockery. “But I must go through with it now, for Miss Thompson’s sake. My first appearance on any stage, as a Dean’s daughter, at an Archbishop’s!”

Angels and ministers of grace defend her, for she has no idea how she will defend herself!

She was half tranquilized by the discomposure of her companions, whom the conjunction of best clothes and a prospective concourse of people threw into an agony of uneasiness.



Dr. Phipps heartily wished himself back in his study at home. His wife, with the superior fortitude of woman, would not have given in had she been fifty times more uncomfortable. At the very last moment her headgear became so unsteady that the compassionate May had to come to the rescue with the fastening pin of her own light straw hat, to avert threatened disaster. The faces of the trio, as they drove under the gateway between the brick towers, betokened as much apprehension as though they had been heretics of old going to examination.

The courtyard was thronged with carriages, the staircase and corridors with arriving guests. All orthodox London society, to the inexperienced eyes of Miss Black and the Phippses, seemed to be there, and bishops to grow wild in the garden. May heard a name—not hers—announced, and devoutly hoped it had been heard by no other, as she tremblingly passed on, in Mrs. Phipps's wake, into the reception room. A film came over her eyes. The next minute she had shaken hands with his Grace, and some ladies—presumably those of the house—for Miss Thompson, as it were by proxy. Fresh arrivals following close behind them, Mrs. Phipps drifted on hurriedly, then came to land on a sofa, the Doctor mounted guard over wife and ward.

May sat rigid and wretched, haunted by the impression that every one in the room was looking at her. That, she knew, was a nervous delusion. Obviously, nothing could be easier than for a small unobtrusive figure like hers to efface itself as she desired in this large semi-official gathering of some hundreds of the clergy and the laity, including many as complete strangers personally to their hosts as herself. The Phippses did not introduce her to anybody. In the first place, they were too shy and flurried; in the second, they knew nobody themselves but one of the chaplains and a clerical couple or two from the backwoods, like themselves; and, besides, it might be presumptuous on their part to seem to patronize their superior officer's daughter.

We have said that May Black, though slight and delicate, made an uncommonly pretty picture. For once she wished with all her heart she were plain. For pull down her veil and screen herself behind Mrs. Phipps's bonnet though she might, she perceived that here, as elsewhere, those who glanced at her once were apt to glance twice. Her brown wavy hair grew in the most ravishing lines around her forehead; the



long dark lashes intensified the color of the sky blue eyes they shaded; the lines of her mouth were perfect; and her countenance in its quaint expression of *naïveté* and seriousness had a striking piquancy and charm. However, once assured that by no reasonable probability could there be any one in the room who was acquainted with her, she ventured to look about, began to recognize some public celebrities among the guests, almost to enjoy herself. There was Longbow, the great African explorer, whom she knew directly from his photograph; Lord Shoebury, the philanthropist, whom she had once heard speak at a meeting; a distinguished French *littérateur* she remembered to have seen pointed out to her in a box at the theatre; and an eminent Conservative statesman, an object of worship to herself and her school-friends. May had strong political sympathies, all on the side of the Tories. She had almost forgotten herself in the pleasant pastime of watching the lions of the assemblage, when she became suddenly aware that Mrs. Phipps was trying vainly to arrest her attention, she having twice failed to respond to her new name.

"I beg your pardon," said May, blushing.

"Dr. Phipps and I are going with a few others to walk over the more ancient portions of the palace. You will come too, will you not?"

May acquiesced with alacrity, doubly delighted at the prospect of sight-seeing and at the escape it afforded her from the public gaze. But her countenance fell when she perceived that the party, which included some five or six besides themselves, were starting under the escort of a gentleman who, once or twice before, she had been sensible was according her face an attention which, though deference itself, was none the less distressing. She felt positive she had never seen him in her life; for if she had, she would not have forgotten it. A tall, erect, sedate-looking officer—he needed no badge to denote his profession as that of arms—not particularly young, but not quite old enough, she judged, to be one of the sons of the house. He seemed very much at home, and had volunteered to officiate as guide to the visitors forming the exploring party. Yet he appeared to have few acquaintances among the crowd, and even, like Miss Black, to be keeping in the background, though assuredly, unlike herself, from choice, not compulsion. May wondered who he might be, then something warned her not to indulge in curiosity. There was danger in departing,

even in thought, from her *rôle*, which was marked out for her as one of masterly inactivity.

She kept modestly by her chaperon's side, and followed through the antechambers to a Gothic interior, where the broken light, shining through marble-shafted lancet windows, fell upon oaken stalls, and screen, and black and white marble flooring.

"This," began the leader of the party, "is the chapel—" He had scarcely made this luminous announcement when he caught May Black's eyes fixed on him with a grave contempt that seemed to say, "Did you think we should suppose it was the stable?" He blushed at his own stupidity, and made haste to add, "the chapel—its the oldest part;" inwardly remarking, for the third or fourth time, what a particularly attractive-looking girl that old frump had got with her. Query: Could she be the old frump's daughter? Answer: No.

Captain Lonsdale committed himself no further on the subject of the structure, but allowed his flock to disperse about, studying the details by themselves. May Black stood still, gazing up into the groining of the lofty roof, he regarding her meanwhile, until he decided that in his capacity of *cicerone* he might hazard an observation to her address.

"Simple though it be," he remarked "it is a singularly pleasing piece of architecture."

"It is indeed," she responded meditatively; "and to think that the bishops have been consecrated here ever since the time of Boniface!"

"Have they, though?" he asked, amused by her earnestness. "Well, often though I have been here, I never thought of that. Please tell me who Boniface was."

"He was Archbishop of Canterbury in the reign of Henry III., and built the chapel, and—" then, stopping short, ashamed of her own simplicity, she concluded shyly, "but you knew that, I am sure."

"Word of honor, no!" he replied. "It is some sixteen years, you see, since I left school."

May was silent. He took her for a child, she bethought her, whom it were natural and legitimate to tease.

"Since you are so well up in Church history," he resumed presently, "and take some interest in past representatives of the Episcopate, you will like to come next to the dining-room, where the portraits of these worthies hang."

He led his party, with due deliberation, to the great hall,

The array of robed prelates, from the time of Henry VIII. downwards, adorning the walls, May owned to finding wonderfully impressive.

He apologized for not being able to name them all to her.

"I've a very bad memory, and should be sure to lead you astray." Then he put in, pointing to one among the number, "There's a fellow I always know—Abbott, who shot a man."

"Shot a man!" uttered May, aghast.

"Certainly! So there, I have actually the advantage of you in historical information. A gamekeeper—quite by accident. Cardinal Pole I know by his scarlet cape; Laud and Juxon by their likeness (only don't ask me which is which—they might be twins); Tillotson by his full-bottomed wig."

"It is very interesting," said May hesitatingly, quite uncertain whether manifestation of feeling would be in or out of character as a Dean's daughter. "But what will they do with future Archbishops?" she asked suddenly. "There is no room for more."

"They will have to weed the collection," he said gravely, "retaining those only who have done most brilliant credit to the See."

"That would be a pity—to break the series."

"But don't you know that we are shortly going to disestablish the Church? They thought of that when they designed the hall, and left just enough room for the probable number to come. The space is nearly filled, as you say; but there will possibly be no further demands upon it. Though I shall not, you may live to see the reform—the Episcopate abolished, and Lambeth Palace surviving, if indeed it survive, merely as a historical monument."

"I hope that day will never come, or that, if it does, I may be dead," said May Black gravely, unable to check herself from speaking her mind and indignation, yet conscious all the time that her interlocutor was bantering her. Then she recollected how rash it was to have embarked in a conversation at all. With a grand effort she strove to keep to her rôle of a lay figure, to be dumb, and restrain her youthful enthusiasm, vacantly to glance round the picture-gallery, regarding unintelligently and without comment even the portraits of Martin Luther and Katherine Parr; proof against further attempts to draw her out on the part of the gentleman conductor, who took a certain pleasure in the ingenuous interest she had betrayed,



To this end he raked his memory for all the historical associations he could recall attaching to library, portrait-gallery, and post-room, but in vain—even to reminiscences of the landing of Essex, Southampton, and Anne Boleyn. May stood firm.

He ascribed her reserve to shyness ; but she could not make her shyness unattractive, least of all to Captain Lonsdale, whose soul detested the rather exuberant manners so largely cultivated by the charming girls of the time.

“Here,” he said, now addressing himself to the general party, “is the entrance to the Lollards’ Tower. Do you wish to ascend?”

Of course they wished it. Here, for May Black, was the climax of the interest of the expedition, and she tripped unwearied up the spiral stairs. But half-way to the summit Dr. Phipps turned suddenly giddy, and his wife had to lead him. In mounting on she rubbed such a quantity of whitewash on her dress, to her private consternation, that she was glad of any excuse, when they reached a halting-place afforded by the leads above, for deciding to remain there with her spouse, whilst the rest of the party climbed the stone newel to the summit.

May’s eyes glistened as she reached the upper story of the turret, and passed through the heavy oaken door into the dungeon, as grim and ancient-looking as even her fancy had painted it.

“The Lollards’ prison?” she murmured under her breath, as she scrutinized the walls, the iron rings, the mediæval-lettered inscriptions and emblems scrawled on the wainscot, the heavily-barred window overlooking the river, with eagerness and awe.

“You know, they say now there never was a Lollard in it,” remarked the Captain, who stood beside her.

“There!” exclaimed the girl, with pretty impatience ; “we have to give up everything by degrees. If there is a little bit of history, a tale or tradition connected with a place, that takes hold of us when we learn it, we are sure to be told afterwards that there is no truth in that part.”

“I don’t well see that there can be much connected with a prison that one need mind giving up.”

“Well, no,” May admitted, on second thoughts.

“There is a fine view from the highest leads, if you don’t mind a slight scramble,” he resumed.

The landing and stair were narrow. May climbed on, im-

agining that others of the party were following ; but they had stayed behind in the prison-room, and only herself and their leader pushed onward and upward to the little battlemented outer space at the top of the turret.

The striking view, embracing palace and gardens, the glorious sweep of the river, and the stately Parliament Houses opposite, with the sun just sinking behind them, fascinated May, who lingered to enjoy it, quite unconscious that her companion was watching her admiringly. Her color was heightened by the breeze, which just stirred the rings of her hair.

Suddenly a sharp gust came, and blew off her hat. Another moment, and it would have been over the parapet into Bishop's Walk. Captain Lonsdale, with commendable promptitude, made a dive into the gutter, and caught it. He turned, and stood holding his prize and looking at May, as she stood bare-headed—ten times prettier so—puzzled and amused by her discomfiture, which was greater than the accident seemed to warrant.

"Oh, I beg your pardon!" she said confusedly. "Please give it me back."

He feigned anxiety to discover whether the hat was crushed or soiled, then finally restored it to May, who adjusted it as low over her brows as it would go.

"He would know me again now to a certainty," she thought, with dread ; then, catching at a straw—"He said he had a bad memory ; I hope it is true."

They rejoined the party and descended the tower, May succeeding in finishing the rest of her sight-seeing in silence. Captain Lonsdale made no attempt to push his attentions further, contenting himself with watching her from a distance as a pretty study. She walked round the gardens with Mrs. Phipps, drank a cup of tea, then caught at the old lady's hesitating suggestion,

"My dear, I think that perhaps we ought to be thinking of slipping away. The Doctor and I start for Scotland by this very night's express."

"O yes, please," May responded most readily.

She tremulously followed her guardians through the forms of leave-taking, and was never so glad in her life as when she found herself back in comparative privacy in the brougham.

Captain Lonsdale watched the trio go out at the door. As they disappeared he turned to his lady hostess, and inquired the name of the departing guests.

"Dr. and Mrs. Phipps, of Glenhowrie."

"And the other lady—the young lady?" he added carelessly.

"The young lady?"—his informant paused, as if at fault.

"Now who was it that came with the Phippses? O, Miss Thompson, to be sure, a daughter of the Dean of St. Martin's."

"Of St. Martin's!" he echoed, in a tone of agreeable surprise; concluding to himself, "Then if we don't become better acquainted, it will not be for want of—opportunity."

And he began to see bright spots in the prospect, hitherto joyless, to which the machinations of ill-luck and the War Office had exposed him—the prospect of approaching banishment from a more favorite station to the military *dépôt* at the quiet cathedral city of St. Martin's.—*To be completed in three Numbers.*

### CHAPTER III.

#### DOLLY'S DIVERSION.

THE stage of the Nonpareil Theatre had undergone many rapid and startling transformations during its three years of existence—the best, the only stage for exteriors, interiors, landscapes, seascapes, and other scapes. But this was its first appearance in the character of a genuine reception-room for *bonâ-fide* guests—guests not Adelphic; and to realize this effect in the course of a morning's work had cost the manager more forethought and trouble than would have the presentment of a real conflagration, a real waterfall, or almost any conceivable phenomenon under heaven. But Mr. Smart was an enterprising man, and had taken great pains to good purpose. With curtains, carpets, flowers, and *bric-à-brac*, the disguise thrown over his premises was so complete that their own master seemed scarcely to know them, as, just five minutes before three o'clock, he looked round upon his arrangements, and saw that they were perfection.

When Dolly Thompson, whom we left on the station platform, found herself standing there alone, with a ticket for the *conversazione* at the Nonpareil in her hand, she could hardly believe in her own identity. The situation might fairly have daunted a spirit as unpractised in adventure as that of our heroine; but Dolly's enthusiasm for the drama was just then in the fanatic period. To stand upon a real stage, to see Rantwell, his compeers and compeeresses, in plain clothes, walking, talking, and partaking of tea and cake, like simple mor-



tals, such as curates, college dons, officers' and canons' wives and daughters, was a cherished heart's desire for whose fulfilment she would cheerfully have sacrificed a year of valuable existence. The escapade was of so exciting a nature that no room was left for after-thought and feeling. Consigning her luggage, duly addressed to Westbourne Terrace, to the charge of a four-wheeled cab, she stepped into a hansom, and said, with assumed airiness, as though the words were not strange to her lips, "To the Nonpareil Theatre, stage-door."

The die was cast. No looking back for her now.

If Mr. Smart's modesty had harbored any lingering doubts as to his extreme popularity in the profession, these must have vanished before the wonderful *empressement* and unanimity with which its members had responded to the invitations to his *matinée*. All came who had been bidden, and a few who had not. He began to fear lest his superfluous guests should overflow into the auditorium, which, of course, was nowhere on this occasion. Singly, like the first drops of a thunder-shower, came the earliest arrivals; then the cloud burst, and they poured in upon him in a thick and incessant stream. Even his cool head began at last to spin on his shoulders, his hand-shakes to become mechanical, his bland smile of welcome to assume a stereotyped character. And still they came. The stage-underlings, who officiated as pseudo-footmen on the occasion, gave him no moment's respite, announcing some half-dozen names in a breath.

"Mr. and Mrs. Trelawney Jacques, Mrs. Tom Royster, Miss Black, Mr. Slingsby, the Miss Merrys, Mr. Kean Jones."

Dolly, on alighting, had felt reassured on finding herself one of a multitude. She had managed her *entrée* judiciously, following in the train of a portly matron, whose ample crimson and amber brocaded skirts floated the girl in as a big wave floats in a bit of driftwood.

"Delighted to see you," said Mr. Smart for the hundredth time; adding confidentially half-aside, "take your seats, ladies, I advise, whilst you can get them."

"That will I," returned the matron aloud, suiting the action to the word; "and so you'd better," she added, in a tone of friendly caution, to Dolly, who was looking round in vain for a vacant place. "By and by they'll have to sit on the floor," she concluded, making room for the girl on one of the three chairs occupied by the crimson brocade.

Dolly slipped into the narrow space beside those skirts,

whose brilliancy seemed to extinguish everything within a certain radius. Whilst their owner was settling down and trying to compress them—a matter of time—Miss Thompson gazed eagerly around, enthralled as Dante when transported into the company of the Homeric heroes, and finding as keen a satisfaction in every separate act of recognition. Rantwell, and one or two more of equal note whom she had once or twice beheld from the stalls, were not so metamorphosed by the absence of stage trappings but that she instantly identified them. Others she knew from their photographs. Engrossed in active and eager observation, she was suddenly startled by an interjection at her side.

“Snakes! ain’t it hot?”

It was the matron, who spoke with a strong Transatlantic twang.

“I should think it was,” rejoined Dolly sympathetically. “Would you like my fan?”

“Thank you kindly, I’ll see,” said her neighbor, accepting the loan. “I guess mine must have taken French leave of me in the cab. Laurie Smart’s in fine form, is he not?”

“Splendid,” returned Dolly; “I never saw him looking so well.”

“It’s the success of *Gulliver*. They say the operetta is safe to run for two hundred nights. They’re to do the duet out of it by and by. You’ve got no programme. Take mine. A book of nonsense, if ever you saw such a thing.”

So indeed it was, except for the outset. The opening recitation was grim earnest, Mr. Eugene Rantwell, whose tragic genius was, if possible, even more at home in the horrible than in the heroic, having volunteered to deliver a deliciously ghostly dramatic poem entitled “The New Frankenstein.”

Dolly’s heart beat high as this famous impersonator of many heroes and many kings stepped forward from the throng of guests, who stood out of his way and fell back as from an imperial presence. As for Miss Thompson, her eyes, with a reverent interest no crowned head would have won from them, were studying every line of the actor’s pronounced features, every fold, every detail of his attire—sleeve-links, gloves, handkerchief, boots: in all she had discovered a special and characteristic significance. Not a wave of his hand, not a turn of his head escaped her as he went though his declamation with all the art and power of which he was master. Dolly, like every one else, thoroughly enjoyed having her feelings

harrowed; and the more vivid the counterfeit presentment of agony and horror became, the keener her ecstasy. It was allowed on all hands that he had never been quite so appalling in it before, and the warmest applause showed how all appreciated the pleasure he had given them.

"So often as I hear that," commented the matron admiringly aloud "so often I have to hold my tongue between my teeth not to scream. What would I not give to be able to make people's flesh creep and curdle up their blood in that style! Once I tried it, and they laughed. Thought it was a joke. There was nothing for it but to make it a joke in reality. At least I made them laugh till they cried, which is the next best thing."

"I really don't know which I like best, the sublime or the ludicrous," answered Dolly politely; "it's just a question of which I am listening to at the moment."

"Well, that Frankenstein's a creepy thing, and I'm glad it's over," returned Mrs. Tom Royster. "Ah, there's that chap Connor just come on. Now we shall have some fun."

"Yes; he's always so droll," said Dolly, anxious to appear familiar with the faces, at least, of the company, of whom even her inexperience could discern that they belonged mainly to theatrical circles. But her real knowledge was limited to the names of some half-dozen at most, and she could only conjecture what immensity of ignorance might be implied by the fact that the fame of Connor, though clearly of high degree, had never reached her ears.

Rantwell's serious monologue was like grace said before a feast, and the feast to which it served as an introduction was one of unreason without alloy.

The burlesque without mercy what we most enthusiastically admire seems a necessity of human nature. When and where faith and devotion are strongest the Church was caricatured by its flock, and its chiefs sanctioned the proceeding. The clay idols, the fictitious heroes with which we people our modern Olympus, must now and then see jesters take their seats and travesty their selves with impunity. Yet all this goes on with impunity to the Olympians. Now some prince of buffoons takes off Rantwell in Antony or Lear. Now it is Romeo and Juliet, Mercutio, Rosalind, Portia, and Orlando, who sit in a row, and, suitably accompanied, sing to us songs of Christy. As refreshing to see the hero play the fool as the fool play the



hero. The fool is the better for the game, and the hero never the worse.

A surprising number of Mr. Smart's guests seemed to have come with a recipe for laughter in their pockets. Ludicrous imitations, grotesque musical sketches, dramatic caricature upon caricature, stump-orator, preacher, lecturer—no one was spared. Those who had heard these comicalities before laughed as if they were new; and, to Dolly, one and all were things of infinite entertainment.

But what was nothing short of adorable was a burlesque sketch, not included in the programme. A ludicrous imaginary dress-rehearsal of the ghost scene in *Hamlet*, Mr. Smart himself enacting the Prince. The Ghost, whose face was disguised, puzzled everybody. He started with a vivid imitation of the provincial actor, then, changing his style half-a-dozen times, each personation more mirth-provoking than the last, he finally revealed himself as the shade of the slaughtered Shakespeare, and came bearing down upon the terror-stricken Hamlet, like the Commander in *Don Juan*, to avenge his own murder.

"It's that young shaver Connor," ejaculated the matron, convulsed, as Ghost clasped victim; and the conclusion, whatever it might be, was lost in the laughter and applause; whereupon the actors, throwing off their scanty disguises, bowed their acknowledgments.

In the lull that followed, a little clatter of plates and cups, that had already once or twice struck as music on the matron's ears, was again pleasantly audible, and she soliloquized frankly and aloud,

"This is the sort of entertainment I own I enjoy—with your bread-and-butter right behind your back!"

Tea, at this juncture, was announced as served in the green-room, whither the gentlemen were invited to escort the ladies. The securing of partners occasioned a general *mêlée*, and some crowding and confusion, amid which the voice of prudence whispered to Dolly to try and slip away. But to be the first to leave, and yet manage to make her exit unobserved, was a delicate matter. She had risen: around her, especially on the matron's side, there was a good deal of joking; then came a playful scrimmage, in the midst of which a young gentleman trod on her dress and tore it.

"I beg ten thousand pardons!" he exclaimed, in dismay.

"You shall have them—for a pin," replied Dolly, gathering

up a few yards of frilling that he had set free, and that trailed gracefully on the floor.

"A whole pincushion you mean. Here it is;" and the offender, none other than the ex-Ghost, that promising comedian Connor, instantly produced the desired article from his pocket, and, by way of atoning for the damage he had wrought, insisted on repairing it himself, performing the task with the utmost neatness and address. But it took time—time spent by the rest in filing off into the tea-room; so that when the work was completed, Dolly found herself alone on the stage, face to face with the comic genius, a young fellow of distinctly pleasing appearance.

He now, for the first time, was looking at the young lady before him, and the adjective he found for her was "prepossessing."

Dolly was not pretty, according to rule, like May Black; but her features suited together so well that the face was a success; her brown eyes charmed by their liveliness, her countenance was so full of animation and good nature, and her manner so genial that she could not wish you good-morning without putting you into a pleasant humor with yourself, and, by consequence, with her.

The solitary pair, perfect strangers to each other, looked a little blank. Then Mr. Connor smiled, and said,

"Pray may I have the pleasure of taking you into tea?"

Dolly assented helplessly, in silence. Perhaps introductions were not so rigorously insisted upon in theatrical as in clerical parties; perhaps he thought she was a Miss Black, and that he ought to know her. Anyhow, she saw no escape.

They followed the crowd into the green-room, where Dolly might satisfy her eyes that the amplest justice was being done to Mr. Smart's merely human fare by the gods of her idolatry. But her attention for the time was drawn off from Rantwell himself, and appropriated by her lively companion.

"What will you have?" he began. "Tea? It's a figure of speech. I see only champagne. But I know there is tea somewhere about, for I heard Rantwell ask for his fourth lump of sugar." He dived under the shoulders of the table-worshippers; then reappeared, carrying what seemed to be a reptile. "Special teacup and saucer, new alligator pattern, designed expressly for Laurie Smart by the Japanese Decorative Institute," he explained, as he presented Dolly with the strange vessel.

"Connor, get me some champagne, do," said the sonorous voice of the American actress. "It's only a juggler could quench his thirst out of a mad mug like that without spilling the best half of what's inside."

"I fly," he said; and having made her happy by bringing a bumper, he turned again to his fair partner. Dolly was afraid to talk of anything but theatrical matters, possessed by an idea that theatrical people never talked of anything else; yet she feared to open her lips, lest she should betray an ignorance that would stamp her as an alien in the land.

"You've seen *Gulliver*, of course," her companion remarked.

"No, I haven't," Dolly confessed; "But don't tell."

"It's great nonsense; but worth all the sense that is running on the London boards at this moment," he declared pensively.

"I am very fond of nonsense," said Miss Thompson, in the same tone. "I consider it one of the Fine Arts, and my favorite."

"Hear, hear," he rejoined. "If I dared, I should agree with you."

"Life's so awfully serious," pursued the girl.

"It is," he rejoined feelingly. "We should die of it if we couldn't now and then take leave of our senses; it's bracing, like a dip in the sea. And it's only on the stage that nonsense gets fair play;" and he began almost unconsciously to hum the arch-popular tune from the arch-popular operetta now running at the house over their heads.

He stopped to sip his tea, and Dolly, *sotto voce*, took up the musical phrase where he had paused, and finished it.

"You know the music," he said.

"Every note, by heart," she asserted with truth. "Even in music I like jokes best."

"We can't always be wound up to the Rantwell pitch," he sighed, suddenly elongating his features, spreading his eyebrows, dilating his eyes, and contriving, by some magical process of facial mimicry, to present the living aspect of the tragedian, between whom and himself, the moment before, there existed not the faintest resemblance.

"If I could do that," was the thought that crossed Dolly's mind, "Miss Black's best friends might be taken in."

"How do you manage it?" she asked, laughing, as Connor's features relaxed into their natural mould.

"I fancy I feel like the individual; and to know how people feel you must watch their faces and changes of expression



minutely. I never forget a face." . . . Here Dolly blushed with a pang of guilty dread ; then it struck her that he would misunderstand, and she blushed again with vexation. He did misunderstand, but did not look vexed in the least.

"And I never remember a name," he concluded. "But what's in a name? and what's not in a face?"

"All, sometimes," the words slipped out unawares. Mr. Connor, in polite perplexity, requested an explanation of the enigma. Dolly felt herself on dangerous ground ; but at that instant Mr. Laurie Smart touched her companion's shoulder, and said,

"Trelawney Jaques, who was to sing the duet with Slingsby, has had to leave already. You must take the other part ; there's a good boy."

"I'm not a good boy. Ask my papa," objected the young man, with pretended querulousness. "And then I've got a cold, and not got my notes."

"Notes? Pshaw! Never saw you use notes in your life. And you won't mind playing the accompaniment, I know. Can't at this moment put my hand on the conductor's score."

But here Mr. Connor stood firm.

"No, my dear Laurie. Anything you like between me and the ladies of my audience ; but not an upright piano. How can I be funny behind a board? Is there no lady or gentleman in the house who will kindly undertake to—" Suddenly turning to Dolly, he said persuasively, "You said you knew the whole thing by heart. You will play for us, I am sure."

This was not in Dolly's programme ; but Mr. Connor was urgent. He had brought her back upon the stage, and she perceived that, by making difficulties, she was only attracting the more attention. The piano stood in a corner, the pianist's place, as Mr. Connor had surmised, out of sight of the company. She yielded hastily, stepped behind the instrument, and struck the first chord. Her own part, which was of the simplest, gave her no trouble, for she knew it well, and her appreciation of the spirit of the piece enabled her to follow the singers in their animated rendering with ease and rapidity. Thus the duet concluded amid a storm of laughter and applause.

When, a few moments after, the duettists turned to thank their lady-accompanist, they were surprised she had already vanished. The last chord had been the signal for the simultaneous exodus of at least five-and-twenty people, offering Dolly

an opportunity for getting away quietly, of which she had promptly and successfully availed herself ; and at this moment she was rattling westward in a hansom cab.

"Who was it who played?" asked the comic singer Slingsby of his colleague.

"I don't know," said Connor. "I trod on and tore her dress, and my pincushion introduced us. Ask Laurie Smart."

"Smart, who was our lady accompanist—the girl in maize?"

"Girl in maize?" repeated Mr. Smart vaguely. "There were several. I don't remember. Somebody somebody brought I fancy."

"Miss Black was her name," announced the American actress. "I heard it called."

"No, that it wasn't," said the comic tenor Slingsby. "I know both sisters, and should have recognized either."

"There's a third—May," said Mr Smart brightly, whose memory was for names, not faces. "I heard of her, and that she's pretty."

"O, she's worse than pretty," murmured Connor. "Black—going into the profession, eh, Laurie?"

"Yes ; all the Blacks go on the stage."

Connor heaved a sigh. "Just my luck," he muttered to himself, and for a moment stood looking before him with a doleful air ; but Mrs. Tom Royster accosted him, and quips and cranks were soon flying again.

Dolly, meantime, safe in a hansom, was congratulating herself on her nimble escape ; and, reviewing all that had passed, she thought she had got through famously.

It was just six o'clock when she entered the ladies waiting-room at Whiteley's, at which establishment she was charged with commissions from home to execute, and which, as it stood within a few steps of her aunt's door, offered a convenient meeting place for herself and her fellow-conspirator, and had been agreed upon as a rendezvous. Ten minutes latter, May Black, duly deposited at the door according to her request by the unsuspecting Phippses, rejoined her *alter ego*.

"Dr. Phipps gave me several messages for your father, the Dean," said May anxiously.

Dolly broke in.

"Yes, yes, I know. Respects, regards, affection ; and if ever we come up to Glenhowrie, etcetera. All right ; I'll deliver them. You take this programme. It will tell you most of

what went on. And don't forget—you played the duet out of *Gulliver* for two young men."

May hesitated.

"Hadn't I better say I gave my ticket to a friend?"

"As you like. Don't give your friend my name, that's all," said Dolly merrily. Then, with a flash of gratitude towards the young girl who had so readily yielded to her will, she added, "I should like to be your friend in my own name, if you will let me. Write to me at the Deanery, St. Martin's, and keep this as a souvenir of our acquaintance," putting a little chased silver stud into her hand. "I must have lost the other in my hurry getting into the cab; but you can wear this on your chain. And one thing more. Can you tell me anything about a tremendously clever young comic actor called Connor?"

May thought, but shook her head.

"Most likely he acts under another, a professional, name."

"To be sure," said Dolly, disappointed.

No more was said, and they parted in haste to rejoin their parents and guardians.

## CHAPTER IV.

### DOLLY'S DILEMMA.

It was some months later, and drawing to the end of September. If there is one month at St. Martin's more dead alive than another, in Dolly Thompson's opinion, it is September. The poor people have all gone off hopping; the young men have all gone off shooting; and the young ladies, of flirtation and philanthropy bereft, find that their occupation is gone.

One or two families tried to get up a little excitement about an approaching ordination, but interest abated when it transpired that the bishop of the diocese would come over to St. Martin's for the ceremony alone.

Dolly, who had seen many an ordination in her little lifetime, had not given the coming event a thought. During the preceding week, which she had spent at the country house of some friends a few miles off, the fact that such a ceremony was coming off in St. Martin's Cathedral next Sunday had entirely slipped from her memory. She was returning home on the Saturday afternoon—returning much against her will; but her mother had insisted upon it with an unusual pertinacity for which Dolly could discover no reasonable excuse.



She was driving home alone in the carriage, holding an open letter in her hand and buried in her thoughts. Their subject was the letter-writer, Miss May Black. The acquaintance, so strangely begun, had not been suffered to drop. A regular correspondence had resulted between the two girls, the sole result, so far, of their adventure. Of this new acquaintance Dolly made no secret at home. On the contrary, she talked so much and so eloquently about the interesting, ill-fated young creature she had discovered in her fellow-traveler, that she contrived to interest Mrs. Thompson herself in Miss Black and her unhappy lot. Dolly drew an affecting picture of the helpless situation of the girl, a member of a theatrical family, predestined to the theatrical profession, yet with a rooted innate dislike to the stage and stage life; thus forced by circumstances to do violence to her nature, which, delicate and sensitive, shrank from publicity and parade. Mrs. Thompson's sympathies were at once enlisted. She knew of a home where the girl could be trained as a teacher, a nurse, or a female missionary, and where a word from herself would secure the *protégée's* admission. Dolly, finding she had overshot the mark, demurred a little, represented that the girl was very young and affectionately attached to her family, who seemed to be good sort of people in their way. So Dolly expressed it; she promised to write, and did.

The following letter from her friend had reached her this morning:

"DEAREST DOLLY,—It has come at last! It is no use to shirk my fate any more. Guess where, of all places, my first appearance is to be made.

"The officers of the *dépôt* at St. Martin's are arranging some amateur theatricals for the 14th of next month. The ladies are to be professionals. My sister, Mrs. White, is engaged for the principal *rôle*. She is to bring me down with her, and I am to appear in a small part. Be it ever so small, it will be too large for me. But it is no use grumbling. I am not the only one who has had to put up with the disagreeables of the stage, whilst knowing that the agreeables can never be hers. My sisters tell me I shall have nothing to do but to smile and look pretty. If I contrive not to cry or look as wretched as I certainly shall feel, it will surprise me very much."

"Poor dear!" was Dolly's comment. "If she comes I must manage to see her. But how? I can't ask her to our house if she comes with the actresses. Mamma wouldn't hear of such a thing."

She was still musing on ways and means when the carriage drew up at the Deanery. She dismounted, and, wishing to pursue her reflections, sought a moment's solitude in the

study, usually deserted at the tea-hour. To her surprise she found it occupied by a contingent of three of her sisters.

"What's wrong with the drawing-room," demanded Dolly, puzzled, "that you're all here?"

"O, there's such a crowd upstairs," they returned in chorus. "Mamma is there, and aunt, and Julia, and the candidates."

"The what?" Dolly stared, then remembered. "To be sure; I had forgotten all about the ordination to-morrow. How many ordinands has the bishop quartered upon us this time? Three. Well, if there were a dozen, I must go in all the same. I want some tea, if there's any left."

And she marched upstairs to the drawing-room without waiting to take off her things.

It was growing dusk, and the light in the oak-panelled oriel-windowed apartment, never abundant, even at noon, was now so dim that Dolly as she entered could barely distinguish the three female forms of her relatives from the male figures of the three incipient curates who sat with them there in sober assemblage. She saluted her mother, who introduced the clerical trio.

"My daughter Dorothea, Mr. Graves, Mr. Budd, Mr. Connor."

Connor—the name falling sweetly on Dolly's ear awakened a pleasant echo. To this namesake of a star of another sphere she made her third bow—for his name's sake, a shade more gracious than the two first. For the rest it was too dark to make distinctions between Budd and Graves, Graves and Connor.

Dolly took her seat by the table unconcernedly, and poured out her tea.

"Mr. Connor, another cup?" It was her mother speaking.

"Thank you, I will."

The voice struck on Dolly's nerves like an electric shock. Mr. Connor's was a perfectly unmistakable voice, slightly muffled, yet full in tone and distinct in utterance. The girl sat aghast, holding her spoon poised on her teacup's edge, petrified with horror, afraid to look, yet afraid not to look. As her eyes got accustomed to the twilight, she thought—or was it a fearful fancy?—that she discerned the outlines of a certain spare figure, excellently shaped head—the brown hair so thick that it would not lie smooth on it—and the morbid features that had somehow stolen a permanent place in her memory.

"Dolly, ring for the lamp," said her mother.

Dolly rose, and walked stiffly towards the fireplace. The personage just now addressed as Connor sprang forwards politely to anticipate her. As they stood near for a moment on the hearthrug a smouldering log fell into the embers, blazed up, and the flickering flame shone full on his face. Not a doubt of it. Her friend of Mr. Laurie Smart's *matinée*, the supposed comedian Connor, was there before her.

Dolly returned to her place on the sofa, heroically swallowed a cup of scalding tea, and made her escape in a trice and before the lights were brought in. She rushed to her own room, shut herself in, and walked up and down in distraction.

That moment, sufficient on her side for full recognition, had in him, with suspicions not yet on the alert, started no more than a vague reminiscence, which, however, it needed but the removal of the veil of dusk to turn to a certainty.

"What shall I do?" Her position seemed desperate. Then she thought she saw a loophole. "To-morrow is the ordination. When it is over he will leave. Till then I must contrive to keep out of the way."

Her eldest sister came to the door.

"Dolly, you must dress. Mother says you are to dine to-night."

"I can't," said Dolly miserably.

"You must, indeed. She particularly insists upon it. I don't know why. She sent me to remind you it was time to dress. But you're usually ready enough to take your turn."

"Who's to take me in to dinner?" asked Dolly defiantly. "*Not one of the candidates?*"

"No; some officer. A Captain Lonsdale, just come to St. Martin's, and whom papa has been asked to invite. They say he is a great acquisition. There's no party, only old Mr. Dryasdust and his sister, and this Captain Lonsdale. It's no use your trying to get off, Dolly dear. But why do you dislike these poor candidates so?"

"Am I obliged to like them?" retorted Dolly savagely.

"Sometimes they are rather insignificant," her sister admitted; "but this time we are most fortunate. At least, that Mr. Connor is something quite out of the common, and just the sort of man you generally get on with and like."

"Who is he?" asked Dolly, who beneath all her alarm was brimming over with curiosity.

"He is the second son of an Archdeacon Connor of St. Dunstan's, and has been particularly recommended to papa by the



Bishop. He's wonderfully musical besides, has an excellent voice, and intones to absolute perfection."

"Anything more?" asked Dolly, with feigned incredulity.

"O yes, he recites beautifully. Julia, last time she was at Westbourne Terrace, heard him at a Penny Reading, she says. He made the people laugh and cry by turns, he was so pathetic, then so funny, like Dickens. O, he's extremely clever, and has refused several good offers—"

"Of marriage?" asked Dolly, with a ghastly pretence of a joke.

"No, curacies. He means to go for a year to Glumford, in this diocese; after that to London. They say he's sure of the first minor canonry that falls vacant at Westminster or St. Paul's."

"Not an actor, after all!" thought Dolly, now first perceiving on what slight grounds she had put him down as a follower of Thespis's cart. But the discovery did not mend present matters in the least. Already she saw him, in her mind's eye, recalling to her their former meeting—the time, the place, the circumstance—in her parents' or sisters' hearing, and her head reeled.

She caught at the hope that as he had seen her but once, and four months ago, and with her hat on, she might still escape recognition. But what was that assurance he had made her?—"I never forget a face;" and even that instant on the hearthrug had been enough to forbid her to trust to hers proving the exception.

Give in she will not, or at least she will die hard. In this awful emergency she had a sudden inspiration.

The other members of the dinner-party were all assembled in the drawing-room when, at the last moment, Dolly sailed in majestically. She had put on her staidest-looking gown, a stiff dark-brown silk her mother had given her, and that she was used to invent every excuse for not wearing, secretly thinking it fitter for her grandmother than for herself. She had combed back her fringe, dressed her hair high, dragged from her forehead; and the astounding change thus wrought in her appearance might well be a match for the best memory.

It was odiously unbecoming, she felt, with a pang, as she looked in the glass ere going down; but where was vanity at such a crisis?

Mrs. Thompson's look of dismay, at the first glimpse of her, told Dolly she had succeeded beyond her hopes.

"Dolly," the distressed mother expostulated aside, in extreme vexation, "what in this world have you been doing with yourself? You look a perfect fright!"

"I thought you disliked my fringe," Dolly whispered back rather wickedly; "you always said it was vulgar; and you chose this gown for me yourself."

"I am sure I don't know how you've managed to disfigure yourself so; but I never saw such an object. So tiresome of you—to-night!" ended poor Mrs. Thompson, in a faint murmur, with irrepressible annoyance: whilst Dolly, unmoved, went and sat where the whole length of the room interposed between her person and the enemy, thinking, with passing perplexity, "What can possess mamma to make her so particular about my looks to-night? Generally she pretends to consider dress of little consequence."

Mr. Connor's eyes, from the moment of her entrance, had been fixed upon her with respectful amazement. He felt thoroughly puzzled. He had been dreaming, then, when an hour ago he caught that glimpse of her by the firelight. Where was the likeness he had imagined? Gone. And yet there was a something left that was more than a likeness. Dolly, inwardly triumphant, returned his grave scrutiny with a look of severity, as she took the arm of the tall grave-looking officer introduced to her as Captain Lonsdale, who was to take her down to dinner.

Dolly may forget many grave events, many of the decisive battles of her life, but never that dinner-party. Of her neighbor, who took great pains to make himself agreeable, and to whom she strove conscientiously to devote her mind, she was hardly cognizant. She could not have told you afterwards whether he were young or old, dark or fair. That dreadful young man opposite—somehow the three candidates had contrived to get into a row, Graves and Budd instinctively hanging on, as for protection, to the more self confident Connor, who thus found himself planted between them—had nothing to do but to watch her. It was a mercy to see how floored he looked, Then a thought of regret shot by. "Why, ah why, did I ever play such a lunatic's freak? If I hadn't it now on my conscience, if he and I had met to-day for the first time, we should have been good friends, I'm sure. And he's not an actor—he's almost as much out of it as I am—but fond of the stage, like me. I see it all now. And here am I, obliged to turn myself into a scare-

crow, and move heaven and earth to frighten him off. O dear !”

And she tried to attend to what her neighbor, Captain Lonsdale, was saying ; it seemed to be something about lawn-tenis.

“ O yes,” she answered at random. “ We are generally playing ; for there are such a number of us that the ball can be kept flying all day ; there is always somebody to take it up.”

“ You have several sisters, then ?” said the Captain with polite interest.

“ We are six,” she answered apologetically. “ It’s too many, isn’t it ? For the sake of our friends we make a point of never being all at home at once. I only came back this evening, and Agnes, our youngest, went off to-day. But we puzzle people at first ; and though we are not alike, it takes them some time to know us, except collectively.”

Captain Lonsdale half smiled. The impression in his mind was that he would undertake to pick out his little friend of Lambeth from any number of sisters.

Now and then during dinner Dolly had noticed that her mother was observing her with a furtive attention that at first raised a wild apprehension. Could she suspect ? But no ; the observation bestowed was kindly and approving, and was shared by Captain Lonsdale. There was some mystery she was too preoccupied just then to try and fathom. The safest thing was to pursue her conversation with her neighbor.

She bethought her of questioning him about the officers’ theatricals spoken of in May’s letter. “ Were they to take place in the theatre, or in St. Martin’s Hall ?” she inquired anxiously ; for in the latter case she saw a possibility for herself of being allowed among the audience. Captain Lonsdale could tell her nothing, and showed no interest in the matter. He had heard that Miss Black and Miss Carlotta Black were good actresses, but had not even asked the names of the pieces set down for performance. Suddenly Dolly fancied that her opposite neighbor had caught the word play-acting. She gave the conversation an ingenious twist ; and Mr. Connor, listening on, perceived his ear had deceived him. It was the cathedral they were discussing.

When the ladies rose from table Dolly had a brief respite. For once she blessed the succeeding half-hour, for once the gentlemen reappeared too soon. She had ensconced herself, with maiden modesty, in a dusky recess, contriving to get her two sisters to the front as a screen. But in less than five



minutes her mother, having inquired of Captain Lonsdale whether he were fond of music, and receiving answer in the affirmative, forthwith summoned Dolly from her shelter, and commanded her to play. The girl had an excuse on the tip of her tongue. Mrs. Thompson anticipated it.

"Some of the music out of *Gulliver*," she said, authoritatively; "you know it perfectly."

Dolly in dismay walked mechanically to the piano. As she took her seat, she had another inspiration. She played a chorus of Handel's. Her mother, she was aware, ignored the petty distinctions 'twixt tweedledum and tweedledee.

When she rose, on concluding, she was confronted by Mr. Connor. The young deacon elect had come up to the piano to listen, and now had her at bay.

"Have you ever noticed a curious resemblance between the second part of what you have just played and the quintet in the finale to Donati's *Joan of Arc*?" he began.

Dolly drew herself up, prim, starched, and slightly shocked, and replied, in a deep low voice,

"We are a very serious people. We never go to the play. If it is an opera you are speaking of, I probably do not know it."

Check! But Connor moved by vague curiosity to return to the charge, ventured, after a pause, tentatively,

"Then do you think all dramatic representations wrong, objectionable?"

"We object to them," said Dolly, in a tone calculated to close the conversation.

"Indeed!" he uttered, and hesitated; then persisted, "Still, I daresay your father, on such a point, makes allowance for difference of opinion. The Bishop of St. Dunstan's, in a speech the other day, having been questioned on that very subject, gave expression to some most liberal views.

"They have not been adopted down here," said Dolly, with a lurking grim irony that mystified him afresh.

"A superficial acquaintance with the theatrical profession often leads people to condemn it entirely, when a more intimate knowledge might bring them to quite different conclusions," he observed less confidently as her expression became more severe.

"You will scarcely persuade mamma," returned Dolly demurely, "that we ought to cultivate the society of actors and

actresses, as we have only to do so in order to find out that all our ideas about them are quite wrong."

"The art in itself is entitled to respect," he urged, "and, considering its danger of being dragged down by its representatives, double acknowledgment is surely due to those who steadily uphold its dignity and good repute, whether actors or managers—Kean Jones or Rantwell at the Empyrean, or Laurie Smart at the Nonpareil."

Dolly felt herself turning strange colors as her mother came bustling up—as it chanced, to the rescue.

"Dolly, Captain Lonsdale would like to see the Saxon antiquities that were dug up the other day. They are in the cabinet in the study. Will you go with him, and show them?"

However preoccupied, Dolly could not but perceive a tendency on her mother's part to promote this new acquaintance. But she was too glad of her escape to quarrel with the manner of it; and she made her explanatory comments on the coins, the brooches, and rings as long-winded as possible. When she returned with the Captain to the drawing-room the three candidates had retired to their apartments, having certain papers of instruction to con. The other guests now took leave, and Dolly, exhausted, sank down on the sofa, fanning herself energetically, whilst the departed ones were reviewed by the ladies.

"What a remarkably nice man that Mr. Connor is, really!" spoke her eldest sister.

"Do you think so?" said Dolly, plaintively. "For my part, I can't understand how a man can be so talkative, so much at ease, just on the eve of his ordination."

"O, it's because he's so well prepared," the other explained. "The Bishop is immensely pleased with him, papa says. He is certainly uncommonly clever."

Dolly hoped she was cleverer still.

"And what did you think of Captain Lonsdale?" asked Mrs. Thompson carelessly, as she wished her daughter good-night.

"I—I think he is very tall and very shy," answered Dolly, afraid to commit herself further on a subject that had entirely eluded her attention. She did not see her mother's covert smile, and marched off to bed, hoping devoutly that the worst of the danger was past.

She came down late next morning, when well assured that

the candidates had left the breakfast-table. The whole day was spent in church, Dolly insisting on going three times, to the edification and surprise of the household. She snatched her meals at odd times, and absented herself from the drawing-room. No one protested to-day. On Monday morning she joined the breakfast-party without fear, confident that her tactics had succeeded. Just at the last moment, by a bit of inadvertence, she undid the effect of all her guile.

Breakfast was over; three portmanteaus stood before the front door. The three departing owners bade their farewells in the drawing-room. Dolly was not there; but Mr. Connor, well on the alert, waylaid her as she was crossing the hall.

"Is this yours, may I ask?" he inquired, presenting a silver sleeve-link carefully wrapped in cotton-wool, a stud she had last seen on her own arm. "I picked it up at a London party not long ago; and I observe you have a brooch on this morning that matches it exactly."

For a moment Dolly, confronted with her lost property—lost inside the walls of the Nonpareil, not outside, as she had thoughtlessly made certain—thought she was lost—identified, like Cinderella, by her slipper. But, with much presence of mind, she took hold of the trinket, and examined it minutely, thus gaining time to prepare her speech.

"At least, I can put you on the track of the owner," she said. "I have seen the fellow to this stud—which, as you say, is like my brooch—and will tell you to whom it belongs. Miss May Black is her name, a poor young girl we know something of, and whom mamma is trying to get into a deaconesses's institution, to save her from having to go on the stage—she belongs to a family of play-actors. Shall I give you her address?"

May Black! The very name; he had forgotten it till now. "Singular case of resemblance between two persons of opposite dispositions!" he thought, as he took formal leave of the Dean's daughter, begging of her to restore the link for him to its rightful owner.

"Checkmate!" thought Dolly, left with the victory, which somehow seemed only a degree better than a defeat.



## CHAPTER V.

## OUT OF THE WOOD.

MRS. THOMPSON was a really unworldly woman. Still, with six daughters, the youngest seventeen, and all of them single, it was but human if she found their six destinies—earthly and material destinies—now and then weigh on her mind. The whisper breathed in her ear that Dolly, whose odd and wilful ways made her something of a cross to her parent, had achieved a conquest—not this time of some bustling second-rate curate, or hulking boy in uniform, with empty brains and empty pockets, but of a staff-officer, of established and exemplary character, good family, and, not least, of some private means—was more than welcome. The story, besides, had a romantic—that is to say, an attractive—sound. You are past fifty ; you are strict ; you are firm ; the wife of a grave divine, with a grown-up family, and hold Evangelical opinions ; there is always a weak point left in you for a romance.

Captain Lonsdale never dreamt he had let out his secret, but the clairvoyance of some lady friends is unimaginable. A single remark, a little question dropped by him to his colonel's wife, Mrs. Walsingham, had rendered her as sure of her fact as though he had made her his confidante ; and, as he had not, she felt free to drop a hint in the proper quarters. She was on intimate terms at the Deanery, and when writing to Mrs. Thompson to recommend Captain Lonsdale as a stranger to their good offices, she had thought fit to accompany her praise of him by a playful intimation of her suspicion that one of the girls—which, she could not tell—had attracted his particular notice at some gathering at Lambeth last season. It did not appear that they had been introduced, but it was quite evident that Miss Thompson had made a very great impression, and this, under the circumstances, she hinted further, had a serious significance.

Mrs. Thompson felt in duty bound to inquire into the antecedents of this "serious" admirer. These were sad, but perfectly satisfactory—the story of his marriage with a wayward girl of great beauty, who, in a fit of pique at the behavior of somebody else, had led him to think his attachment returned. Become Lonsdale's wife, she had racked him by her indiffer-

ence and utter recklessness of conduct, and died in a twelve-month with the name of her first lover on her lips. That was seven years ago, but the gloom it had cast over the man's life seemed likely to be permanent. Those who knew him best saw no chance of its being dispelled, except by a second—happier—marriage; and his bitter experience had left a profound depression, an indifference, hard to overcome. This proud triumph, it appeared, was reserved for her Dolly, who had overcome it seemingly at first sight.

Mrs. Thompson was not so bad a politician as to let the gossip go any further, and even to her informant she treated it as a jest. But Captain Lonsdale was well plied with invitations to the Deanery—now to dinner, now to lawn-tennis. He always accepted, which confirmed existing impressions; and Mrs. Thompson took care that Dolly should always be at home. Her merry ways and high spirits relieved the visitor of the *mauvaise honte* and diffidence from which he constitutionally suffered. She and this “six feet of solemnity,” as she privately nicknamed him, were soon on good terms.

The Captain, infinitely too shy and delicately fastidious to ask point blank for the sister he had seen in London, confident, moreover, of a speedy meeting, came once or twice in hopes of seeing a face that seemed to fly from before him. On his third visit he settled the point to his satisfaction. He had now seen all the six daughters but one, Agnes, the youngest, still absent on a visit, but who was returning, Dolly chanced to mention, on the 14th. Agnes, then, was his heroine.

The 14th was the date fixed for the officers' theatricals, now duly announced and become the nine days' interest of the town. A programme had found its way into the Deanery, and Dolly opened fire at once on her mother, enforcing her demand for leave to go by arguments she had relied on as unanswerable. The play was not to be played in a play-house, but in a sober lecture and concert hall. The players were not real players, but gentlemen, all of whose names stood on the Deanery visiting-list. The plays were of the strictest propriety; the actresses three sisters, whose unimpeached respectability proved them persons of the strongest principles, superior to the dangers of their profession—the youngest a girl in whom she and her family had personally interested themselves, and who might yet, perhaps, be snatched from the toils of a frivolous calling. Mrs. Thompson remained inexorable; and Dolly, whose heart was set on seeing May's *début*, concluded, half

crying, that it was too hard to say No, since Mrs. Walsingham had offered to chaperone her and Agnes, and had asked them to join a party who were going together, and to stay to a little supper given by the officers at the hall after the play—the Grimshaws, and the Fanshaws, and Captain Lonsdale . . . Here the speech ended in something like a sob.

Mrs. Thompson's countenance relaxed. "Well, Dolly, don't be silly about it; I will see if anything can be done—only, first, I must ask papa."

But asking papa meant "Yes," Dolly knew of old, and was confounded by the sudden concession. What had provoked it?

But for certain previous circumstances it would not have occurred to her to trace it to her mention of Captain Lonsdale's name, which, in fact, by suggesting to Mrs. Thompson that Dolly's eagerness was prompted by some other cause than stage enthusiasm, had induced the withdrawal of opposition. It was not the first time she had been struck by the readiness displayed at home to bracket herself and their new military acquaintance. Now, she had heard people say of him that he was the best *parti* in St. Martin's at this moment. Gossip reported further that he was sick of the service, and meant soon to retire; whence gossip might assume that he must be looking out for a wife, and the daughters of St. Martin's had shown some willingness to promote his views. It would be horrid, thought the indignant Dorothea, to be suspected of such a design herself.

"Have I a match-making mother after all?" she asked herself scandalized. "But it won't do. He must see she is trying to secure him for one of us. Surely vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird."

But, however won, she must exult in the permission accorded her from head-quarters to accept Mrs. Walsingham's invitation for herself and her youngest sister.

Captain Lonsdale, who cared little for theatricals, but always did his duty, had lent his name as a patron, bought two stalls, given them away to a young brother officer who could ill have afforded himself the indulgence, and felt that England could expect of him no more. But Mrs. Walsingham could, and did. When pressed by her to join her and her friends, he excused himself. She persisted.

"Oh, but I counted on you! Pray come. I am making up a party with the Grimshaws, and the Fanshaws, and two of



the Deanery girls—Dolly and Agnes, who comes home to-day.”

The Captain hesitated ; but he was only casting about for the best way to recant with dignity.

“ Well, since you are so kind,” he began, “ I shall be very happy to make one. I should not have thought of going on my own account.”

The programmes were being scattered broadcast about the country over a distance of some twenty square miles. One morning Mr. Connor—at the country curacy where he was working like three of the ordinary make, to the mournful satisfaction of his rector, who felt that so intelligent, so popular, so musical, so capable a neophyte, with high ecclesiastical connections too, was not long for the obscurity of Glumford parish—received by post a bill of the play from a former schoolfellow—a young cavalry officer, who had just joined the St. Martin’s dépôt—together with a note, asking him to come over for the evening, and offering him a stall for the entertainment, and a bed for the night.

Mr. Conner wrote to accept, without reading the programme. Just as he was closing his letter, his eye, falling on the playbill, was caught by the first item :

“ A HAPPY PAIR.

Ferdinand . . . . .	MAJOR WOOD.
Constance . . . . .	MISS MAY BLACK
	(her first appearance on any stage).”

“ May Black ! ” he uttered, with mixed feelings. “ The girl I was so taken with at Smart’s *matinée*, who talked so brightly, and who, in the face, so exactly resembles that very serious daughter of the Dean of St. Martin’s. How I should like to see her once more ! ”

Irresolution sat on his countenance, conscience saying, “ Connor, forbear ! What can you and a charming young actress have to do with each other, now ? ” Then the doubt cleared, as conscience got her answer : “ Nothing, so go ; or out on you, Connor, for a coward ! ” Conscience rose to the occasion, and he posted his letter without further demur.

The evening came. All things were propitious for May’s *début*. The moon and stars shone out ; county magnates drove in from far ; St. Martin’s Hall, made gay with military decorations, with flags and murderous weapons arranged in pacific and symmetrical shapes of stars and diamonds, was already full when Captain Lonsdale, who had been detained late at the barracks by his military duties, came hastening to join Mrs.

Walsingham and her party. They had already taken their places in one of the front rows of stalls, reserved for them. The vacant chair awaiting the defaulter was between two young ladies, Dolly Thompson and her sister. The curtain was about to rise as he walked quickly up the room and slipped into his stall just in time. Recovering from the slight embarrassment of his tardy and conspicuous entrance, he saw on his right hand a lank, over-grown, sandy-haired girl, with largish features and an awkward figure.

"My sister Agnes—Captain Lonsdale," said the voice of Dolly, on his left, introducing the youngest and plainest of the Dean's daughters.

The Captain bowed, and sat looking blankly before him, staggered by this utter discomfiture of his long-cherished anticipations; whilst Agnes, at first sight, put him down as deficient in intellect.

The next instant the curtain drew up, disclosing the play-scene of the comedietta, the "breakfast room, elegantly furnished;" and there alone on the raised stage stood a pretty, slender girl, with clustering brown hair, delicate form and features, and that grave, gentle, childlike look and sensitive countenance that had touched a long-silent chord in the heart of the Captain, which, as the shrewd reader needs not to be told—though the world were imposed upon by his cold reserved manner—was rather susceptible.

For some minutes this bewilderment was so extreme that not a word from the stage seemed to reach his ears. But soon he forgot his perplexity in the interest of watching her performance, which had a peculiar charm—the charm often felt in the dramatic effects of an untaught child, who acts surprisingly well, all unconscious of the effect it is producing or how it is produced. Nothing could be prettier than her personation of the young bride—her tenderness, playful affection, coaxing, petulance, disappointment, relenting—all inimitably expressed. It was not art, but a natural gift, untrammelled by apparent consciousness, effort, imitation, or artifice. Everybody was delighted, and the little duologue concluded amid the heartiest applause.

In the second piece, though her rôle was a minor one, it was felt to be one of the pleasantest features of the play. Her presence gave a charm to the stage, her voice and manner a freshness and reality to the little drama; every point about her seemed full of promise of success. Dolly, who had

previously been on tenterhooks with anxiety for her friend, from the first moment was set at ease on the subject, and by the last had risen to enthusiasm. There was a general impression indeed that a great revelation of talent had been made. "Happy being!" thought Dolly, "in the glorious sense of such an artistic vocation, the practical annoyances and drawbacks of her profession will sink into nothingness; she will not even remember her first aversion, except to laugh at it." The young *débutante*, without doubt, was the heroine of the evening; and when the curtain fell for the last time, the kindly audience, with one consent, singled her out for a special recall.

This over, they began to disperse, only those few remaining who had been privately invited by the amateurs to stay for supper. Dolly, standing in one of the groups, was discussing the acting with fluency and animation with a young officer she knew, when the subaltern's companion, whose figure hitherto had been partly screened from her sight, stepped forward from behind his friend to wish Miss Thompson good-evening.

"So you do attend theatrical performances now and then," Mr. Connor said pointedly, as they shook hands.

"The—the—the exception to prove the rule," stammered Dolly, game to the end; but all was lost, as she knew. Her hair, her dress, her manner, he had surprised them, as he had seen them at first, without disguise.

"And I feel sure," he pursued confidently, "that the first time I had the pleasure of meeting you was on the occasion of a former exception. Have you forgotten the *matinée* at the—"

"Hush, I implore!" broke in Dolly, in an agonized whisper—for Agnes was listening. "I'll explain all by and by," she managed to add just audibly, "the first opportunity."

Already Mr. Connor, who was quick of intelligence, was talking about the decorations. The two remained in conversation till the hall was cleared of the crowd, and the moment came for the guests to move into the supper-room. Mr. Connor offered his arm to Dolly. Mrs. Walsingham looked round for Captain Lonsdale to escort her other *protégée*; but, by a lapse of courtesy unheard of in this most punctilious of men, he had deserted, disappeared.

The moment the audience had risen, on the conclusion of the last piece, he had left his stall, and, unmarked in the crowd, made his way round the platform to the side-door



leading from the hall into the artists' room. He looked round for the leading amateur. Major Wood was his friend, and would introduce him in form to Miss May Black.

But he found the apartment in commotion, and stopped short. There on the sofa lay the young performer, white and lifeless.

"Fainted dead away immediately on coming off the platform," reported the Major, who, with his brother amateurs, crowded round her in helpless consternation.

"Stand off—give her air!" exclaimed Captain Lonsdale authoritatively; and, pouring out a glass of water from a decanter on the table, he handed it to her sister, who supported her. "Open the window. Get some salts from one of the ladies in the hall," continued the Captain; and distressed subalterns flew to execute his orders.

"It's not the heat," remarked Mrs. White, as she sprinkled the girl's forehead. "Poor child! she's *nervous*. I knew it, but never dreamt it was as bad as this. Ah, dear, she can never be an actress. It's a thousand pities."

"O, it's the first plunge, that's all," said the experienced amateur. "We've gone through it, every one of us; it soon wears off."

"Well," Mrs. White replied, glancing expressively from the burly form of the sanguine Major to the slight figure she held in her arms, "it might—but it might wear her out first; it might kill her to get used to it, if she takes it so. May, you little goose, look up, cheer up; it's all over."

Presently the child opened her eyes, half perceived how matters stood, and began to laugh rather hysterically. She sat up, and made an effort to collect her senses. The first thing she saw distinctly was Captain Lonsdale holding out a vinaigrette, and looking, as he felt, very much concerned. Startled though she was, she never thought of fainting again.

"You'll be all right by and by, said her sister.

May assented by a nod. Her head was still confused; it was wisest not to try to speak. She sat, holding the vinaigrette, and recovering herself by degrees, whilst the others considerately talked among themselves to give her time to get her nerves under control. Then her sister came up and introduced Major Wood's friend, saying,

"Captain Lonsdale will take you into the supper-room. Get her a glass of wine. She is quite well now."

May, feeling as if in a dream, acquiesced passively, and took

the arm of her appointed escort, glad to cease to become the mark for general attention. He led her towards the supper-room, and sought out a window recess in the lobby, where she was sheltered from the public gaze. The fresh air floated in from the open casement against which she leaned as she sat, pale as a sheet still, and trembling a little, for the faint had been merely the climax ; the ordeal from the outset had shaken her nerves profoundly.

"You acted beautifully," he said by and by, thinking to reassure her. "Nobody, I am certain, could have had less occasion to be disturbed about what she was doing, or how she was doing it."

She smiled deplorably. "Everybody says so. They mean to be kind." Then struck by the bright idea that it was perhaps only kind flattery after all. "But did I really?" she asked, looking up at him with earnestness, and a confident assurance that he would tell her the truth.

"Well," he said, "I am a very old stager, and seem not to care for these things ; but you made us feel with your part from beginning to end. Why, what's the matter?" he asked, discomfited, for she looked ready to cry. "Would you have liked it to be said you had failed?" he added banteringly.

"Yes," she answered simply, "as then I need not go on with it. When the curtain went up first, and I saw the faces and the opera-glasses turned upon me, I thought I should have died."

"Quite natural ; a first appearance," muttered the Captain. "And that was only the first moment, I daresay. It was different afterwards."

"Worse," May declared. "Each time I came off I had the horrible feeling of half-waking from a bad dream, and when it was time to go on again I had to force myself. It was like stepping over the edge of a cliff."

"You will get used to it," he said mechanically.

"Never!" she exclaimed, with a flash of energy that died directly. "I should hate to," she added slowly. But she will get used to it, of course, as he knows, and she feels, perhaps, in the depths of her heart, and that is the worst of it.

"If it tries you so very much," he remarked, "your people will surely let you give it up."

"Yes ; but that will vex them. They have all so looked forward to my getting on. I never thought I should. I wanted to go out as a governess, but they don't like to send me among

strangers. Our friends belong to the stage, and they said I might take a good position at once if I had talent. Can one have talent for what one detests?" she asked seriously of her oracle.

Poor May's strained nerves were still in a flutter from the reaction after their over-tension, but there seemed something decidedly soothing in her companion's presence. His calm grave manner helped her to rest and to steady herself. He made her tell him about her life, her half-fledged hopes and fears, and how from a child she had always shrunk from the prospect of personal connection with the stage. No wonder, thought he; since every word and look, every thought expressed, seemed to reveal a nature about as fitted to parry the affronts, resist the injustices, cope with the active enmities, slanders, and mortifications of public professional life, as to go before the mast. Kill her it would not; she would probably get inured to it first, but at the cost of those very qualities that lent its present distinctive charm to her little personality.

"How long do you remain in St. Martin's?" he asked rather abruptly.

"Till the day after to-morrow. My sisters want to see the old town and the cathedral."

"Ah, the cathedral. I should like to go over it with you. You must let me; though I am afraid if you ask me many questions about it my church history will break down, as it did once before in Lambeth Chapel, as you may recollect."

May, from white, suddenly became crimson; but she made up her mind in a moment. "It is of no use. Miss Thompson will be angry, but I must tell."

And she told him the story that Dolly, on her side, had just finished relating to Mr. Connor in the supper-room. It was terrible, Miss Thompson had thought beforehand, to have thus to put herself at the discretion of a stranger. Better this stranger, she felt afterwards, than many she had known all her life. Ere the fair penitent had half got through her confession, his gravity was so upset that he had much ado to restrain his mirth within the limits becoming to his cloth.

"When first I saw your face," said Dolly, as her recital ended, reverting to that moment of mutual recognition in the Deanery drawing-room, "I thought I should have fainted."

Mr. Connor expressed his dismay that his face should produce so painful an effect as that upon a young lady.



"It was impossible to explain or to warn you," she continued. "I saw I must dissemble. How did I do it?"

"So well," he assured her, "as to destroy my faith in harmonies of countenance and character, and I have mistrusted the human face ever since."

Dolly expressed her contrition that she should have instilled the poison of misanthropy into his mind, and both agreed how providential was the occurrence of the present opportunity for clearing the matter up.

Were they strangers ever? All this was much more like renewing an old acquaintance than breaking the ice of a new one; and in such a case the process may go on with astonishing speed. Time flew. Mrs. Walsingham talked of sending for her carriage.

"I must see May Black," said Dolly resolutely, "to—say good-night. Take me to find her, Mr. Connor."

After some search they descried her, still in the window-recess of the lobby, with her sedate partner, half screened by the curtains. Dolly bent on the pair a momentary look of sudden and immense intelligence, then approached, and holding out her hand to the girl, leaned forward, and whispered in her ear, with a significant glance at Mr. Connor.

"The murder is out, dear. My comedian's a curate, and knows all."

May whispered something back. Dolly, disconcerted for an instant, promptly recovered her self-possession.

"It seems," she said, looking ruefully from the Captain to the curate, "that you both hold our secret in your hands. Will you keep it, for we should like to know?"

Both gentlemen swore that fire should not melt it out of them; they would die for it, if necessary, on the scaffold.

"We will trust you," said Dolly impressively; but as Mr. Connor led her into the passage where her friends awaited her, she hastened to add, "We must, we cannot help ourselves. I suppose Captain Lonsdale is to be trusted?"

"Miss Black seems to incline to that opinion," said the curate thoughtfully, as he helped her on with her cloak.

"Yes," Dolly responded low, with a light laugh. "They have made friends quickly—who met but once before to-night."

"He never loved, that loved not at first sight," was the response. Mr. Connor delivered the line gravely, as to himself, in an undertone, but with such masterly inflection and ex-

pression that it was quite natural, thought Dolly afterwards, that these last words of his should run in her head.

Only a few weeks later St. Martin's was startled by the news of the engagement and approaching marriage of Captain Lonsdale. It was unpardonable. St. Martin's, at all events, will never forgive him. The smiles of all the fair maids of the county within calling distance had been thrown away upon him, and he was going to throw himself away by a love-match with the pretty penniless girl who, just a month ago, in that town itself, had made her first and last appearance on any stage.

Mrs. Thompson was both shocked and distressed, and thought unutterable things about the fickleness of military men and the wiles of actresses. She broke the news gently to Dolly, and shook her head over her daughter's cheerful reception of the same, assigning it to pride and self-conquest. The girl must be wounded at heart, and would pine and fret. But months have since elapsed, the wedding has come off, Dolly has never looked better in her life. One last worse fear haunts her parent yet. She feels convinced that the girl, in accepting another man, is acting in a huff; for Mr. Connor contrives to be a good deal at St. Martin's. He has become a general favorite at the Deanery; but there is an impression abroad that his visits concern Dolly in particular, and Mrs. Thompson is learning to look upon him as her son-in-law elect.

## “FOUNDED ON FACT.”

I HAD written a novel which, I may say without affectation, had been received, alike by the public and the press, with marked favor. Possibly the generous reception extended to it may, in some measure, have been the result of my own frankness in at once acknowledging the source from which I had drawn my inspiration. Nevertheless, I am, I think, justified in saying that the book owed its success less to the intricacy of its plot than to the adroit manner in which the incidents were handled, and, above all, to the subtle analysis of a mind gifted beyond the common.

The volume has been so recently in the hands of readers, and by them so fully discussed, that I feel a not unnatural diffidence in referring to it here in anything like detail. If there is one thing I dislike more than another, it is the thrusting of my own personality before the public. But, unfortunately, I have no option in the present instance: I have given a solemn pledge under circumstances of peculiar gravity, and the responsibility resting on me until that pledge is redeemed cannot readily be over-estimated. I have—unwittingly, it is true—perpetrated a serious wrong against a fellow-creature, and the only method open to me of undoing the evil thus wrought is to make my recantation no less public than the error which renders it necessary.

Although, therefore, I do not feel called upon to enter with any degree of minuteness into the particulars of my story—a task peculiarly distasteful to one of my modest disposition—I am forced to recall to the reader's memory one or two of the leading events set forth in its pages. It will be remembered that in the preface I at once, as I have said, disarmed hostile criticism on the score of originality by candidly declaring the basis of my tale to be the account of a certain trial for murder, which I had unearthed from an old newspaper. It would, however, be unfair to my own share in the work did I not add that the details there given were of the most meagre kind—a veritable skeleton in fact, from which not only every vestige of flesh had long since disappeared, but which, during those



years of sepulture, had lost a goodly number of its original bones; and among these many of the most important. To me, then, fell the task of rehabilitating this time-worn structure—of clothing it again, so to speak, with its former wrappings—and of imparting to it such vitality as might prove acceptable to the public of the present day.

The newspaper report to which I have alluded was short, and to many might seem prosaic. It told in concise language how a certain Benjamin North had been tried and convicted of the murder of his wife, Hypatia, which crime no doubt, although the fact remained unrecorded, he in due course expiated on the scaffold. The evidence went to show that for many years previous to their marriage the union of these two had been looked upon as probable, and that only a series of malign influences had prevented the consummation of their hopes at an earlier period. Their happiness, however, was fated to be of brief duration. Shortly after the wedding, Hypatia—no longer, be it said, in the first bloom of her youth—developed symptoms of ill-health. The circumstance did not pass unobserved by her husband, in whose favor it was urged at the trial that no one could have displayed greater patience or devotion. The haunts of his earlier days were forsaken, and old friends saw almost nothing of their former comrade. On the rare occasions which found him absent from his wife's side it was apparent, moreover, that he had changed greatly. His manner was more serious and at times even depressed. A certain gloom had settled upon his face, and his very gait betrayed a mind anxious and harrassed.

The sudden death of his wife followed soon after. Of its cause there never was the smallest doubt; a day or two previously North had purchased a quantity of arsenic with the ostensible purpose of giving it to his horses to improve the appearance of their coats. It was clearly proved, and indeed was never denied, that his wife's death had resulted from a dose of this very poison.

The defence appears to have been conducted on the most primitive lines. A plea certainly was advanced that the woman had, either by accident or design, taken the arsenic herself; but as no evidence was adduced in support of the assertion, the man's case quickly fell to the ground. Nor, from what I could gather, did the result cause him either surprise or uneasiness. Like the Greeks of old, he seemed to see in his

approaching doom the hand of fate, from which no mortal aid could save him.

Such then was the framework upon which I had avowedly built up my story, carrying candor even so far as to give chapter and verse for my authority. And although it may, at first glance, be thought that the narrative contained little either of an extraordinary or sensational nature, to me there was much both keenly pathetic and dramatic in it. I conjured up the early struggles of these loving hearts—the long, slow years of waiting until their hopes at last should be crowned with fruition. In Hypatia I recognized a woman of a trusting and loyal disposition; in North a man of lofty, if somewhat self-contained, character. And towards these two, just as the cup of happiness was raised to their lips, the hand of death was seen to stretch forth, and the inevitable end to approach. That North was convinced of his wife's near dissolution I had no doubt, and that he felt the coming separation even more acutely than herself was no less clear to me. And so he had taken his determination. If they might no longer live together, death at least should not part them. Imbued with this resolve, he had purchased the poison, intending to make away with both his wife and himself. But, after administering her portion, his nerve had failed him; and before he could summon up courage sufficient to complete his purpose, justice was on his track. Nevertheless, when his fate came, he met it calmly and heroically, conscious that if he had sinned in act he was at least innocent in intention.

The character of the man had grown upon me with wonderful vividness, and I had taken the greatest pains to portray the motives by which he had been animated. The success of the book may be accepted as some indication that my efforts were not wholly in vain.

Some few weeks after its publication I was sitting one evening alone in my study. It was close upon midnight, and I had already been writing for several hours, as it was necessary that the work I had in hand should be finished by a specified time, and I was anxious to keep faith. Just at that moment I found myself brought to a stop by the want of certain data, which I remembered were to be found in one of my reference-books. Being desirous to complete the article before retiring for the night, I accordingly laid aside my pen, and proceeded downstairs in pursuit of the volume in question.

A few minutes' search sufficed to provide me with what I

required, and, taking the book in my hand, I returned once more to my work. Entering the room hastily, it was not until I reached my place at the table that I noticed the chair opposite me to be occupied.

I must confess to considerable surprise and even some little alarm at the apparition of a stranger in my house. With the exception of the servants I live alone, and certainly I had no recollection of having invited anyone of this gentleman's appearance to call on me at so unseemly an hour as midnight. Besides, how had he contrived to enter without making himself heard?

"Good-evening, sir," he said with a strong provincial accent, as I took my seat.

"Good evening," I replied, not very cordially, perhaps; but under the circumstances an absence of warmth might be excused. "I fear, however," I continued, "I have not the advantage of knowing whom I am addressing."

As I spoke I made a hasty survey of the stranger in the hope of recalling the occasion on which we had met before. But my efforts were vain. His features seemed wholly unknown to me.

These, it may be observed, were sufficiently remarkable to leave a lasting impression upon a memory less retentive than my own. But what struck me most forcibly in this first examination was the old-fashioned air of the man; an impression, by the way, considerably heightened by his style of costume, which appeared to be modelled upon a pattern fashionable in the early years of this century, but curiously out of keeping with the present-day furniture of my room. Two other points in particular attracted my attention: the first, that he was a very small man—so small, indeed, that as he sat on a not inordinately high chair, his feet did not even touch the ground, but hung suspended in mid-air, oscillating backwards and forwards like a pair of pendulums; the other, that his face was exceedingly red and chubby. There was, moreover, a good-natured twinkle about his eyes which immediately suggested to the observer a power of appreciating a joke, if not of too subtle an order, quite equal to the average.

Although I myself was unconscious of having given utterance to anything particularly humorous, he seemed to draw from my reply a considerable fund of amusement, for it set him laughing somewhat boisterously. "And yet," he an-



swered, "there's nobody living knows—or thinks he knows—more about me and my doings than yourself."

"You must be laboring under some mistake," I rejoined gravely. "Unless my memory greatly deceives me, we have never met before to-night, so that it is impossible I should be acquainted with your history."

"That's precisely what I've come to complain about," said the little man, turning a shade redder, and with a touch of irritation in his voice; "you admit you have never seen me before—know nothing of my thoughts, actions, manners, or tastes, and yet, forsooth, you coolly constitute yourself my biographer!"

"Your—your—what?" I queried.

"My biographer," replied the stranger. "My name, sir, is North—Benjamin North—and I've taken some little trouble, let me tell you, to come here to-night, that I may have the satisfaction of a personal explanation with the gentleman who has been good enough to write my life."

I sat back in my chair speechless, overcome with the variety of emotions which crowded upon me. But what perhaps oppressed me more than any, was the thought that I had been basely tricked and deceived. *This* Benjamin North—this red-faced, commonplace, fat little person, the prototype of that high-souled and gentle man whose career I had traced with so loving a hand! It was impossible; or if it were indeed true, then I had been deeply wronged: robbed of what is dearest to the writer's heart—a noble ideal.

"I thought I should surprise you," he resumed, "and I'm pleased to find that you have at least the grace to be silent. But don't suppose I've come all the way from the other world simply to taunt you. No, sir, in so acting I had a definite object in view—an object, moreover, I intend shall be accomplished before I return." He paused here a moment, whether from excitement or want of breath I was unable to determine, but quickly continued in an impressive tone contrasting ludicrously with his appearance: "You sir, have done me a serious injury."

As he said these words I felt inclined to break into a hysterical laugh at the absurdity of the accusation, but with a strong effort I controlled myself. "I do not," I observed, "quite understand what grounds you have for complaint."

No sooner had I spoken than I would have given much to recall the sentence. The effect upon Mr. North was so decided

as to cause me serious alarm. His face became purple, and I feared every instant to see him roll off his seat in a fit of apoplexy. The horrible thought forced itself upon me : what if I were left with the corpse of a ghost upon my hands? Fortunately, however, I was to be spared that calamity, for, recovering himself, he again addressed me, this time almost savagely :—

“ ‘Grounds for complaint ! ’ ” he echoed. “ ‘Why, sir, putting aside all question as to facts, regarding which, by the way, you’re about as far wrong as a man *can* be, where, may I ask, did you find authority for the character you have given me ? ’ ”

The question certainly non-plussed me not a little. “ I—I must allow,” I answered, “ I drew that from my imagination.”

“ ‘Imagination ! ’ ” he replied in an accent of the most profound contempt. “ ‘Exactly ; you novel-writers seem to fancy that the moment you have uttered the shibboleth ‘Imagination’ the last word has been said. It never occurred to you, I suppose, to think what *my* feelings might be on the subject ? ’ ”

“ I confess,” I returned somewhat humbly, “ I had not given that point the consideration it doubtless deserved. You must remember, however,” I added in extenuation, “ that you had been dead some seventy years. Moreover, I took the precaution of changing your name.”

“ That’s good,” retorted the little man, swinging his legs to and fro with additional force. “ Really you are *too* considerate. And *such* a disguise too ! Nobody, of course, could possibly recognize Benjamin North under the pseudonym of Benjamin South.”

“ The two names are at least as far apart as the poles,” I suggested with a vacuous smile, vaguely hoping to turn the matter into a humorous channel.

“ Egad ! you’ve a pretty wit,” he answered, “ a most excellent wit.” Then waxing warmer—“ Damme, sir ! I’ve known a man run through the body for a worse joke.”

I hastened to express my satisfaction that the quality of mine was not such as to call down upon me a similar fate. But I spoke to regardless ears, for, paying no heed to my interruption, Mr. North again proceeded to the attack :—

“ Come, sir, let’s have a look at this precious book of yours. You’ve a copy under your hand, I see. There are one or two passages I’d like to have the pleasure of hearing you repeat aloud. Suppose we begin with page twenty-nine ! ”

The consternation visible upon my face at this proposal brought back my interlocutor to a pleasanter sense of things, and a look of marked content settled upon his features as he said, with a grim chuckle: "It isn't every day an author has the privilege of declaiming his own productions to so appreciative an audience."

Recognizing the futility of resistance, I took up the volume and opened it at the point indicated. As I read, the words seemed to take a new and unnatural meaning, and I could hardly realize that they were the same which, an hour ago, had appeared to me so full of power and descriptive insight.

"The laws which regulate Nature and Humanity," I began in a hard, spasmodic voice, "while working towards the same ends, have each their different methods of attaining results. With the former the thing that is precious is too often hidden beneath a valueless husk; with the latter seldom or never. So it was in Benjamin South's case. The noble soul within was adumbrated by the lofty expression of his face; the unconscious yearnings of a higher nature were traced upon every line of his features. Tall and meagre, almost to emaciation, his very person indicated a disregard of all sensual pleasures which, it was manifest, swept past shame-stricken and abashed, leaving him pure and unsullied as the soft white light of the crescent moon."

"It's a little mixed," said my listener, with a grin of malignant pleasure, "but it describes me to the life. And your elocutionary style brings out the points with such vividness, that you really must allow me to congratulate you upon it. Pray continue, sir, for, next to epitaphs on gravestones, it's the most entertaining reading I've met with for a long time."

Unwilling as I felt, there was nothing for it but to do as he requested.

"He was gifted," I proceeded, "with a mind of a singularly analytical and introspective type, possessed, too, of an unequalled faculty of projecting itself into the future, and of bringing back thence much that would have proved elusive to a nature less liberally endowed. The potentiality of his presence was apparent under any circumstances; it dominated all with whom he came in contact, and may perhaps be best described by the word electrical. It will not, however, surprise anyone that a mind so purely subjective in its action should have had its weak point, and it must be admitted that synthetically South's was a comparative failure. The creative faculty had been in a great measure denied to him, and herein he fell short of greatness. But in saying so much I do no more than allow that he was one of those who only just miss attaining the heights upon which men of the noblest genius and power of expression have walked and lived."

"Thank you!" said my guest, whose face during the recital of the preceding had gradually become overcast and troubled. "I think I won't ask you to go on. It's very fine, no doubt,



but I'm afraid I don't quite grasp the meaning. Besides, it makes me sleepy, and I've one or two matters to set right before I leave."

I laid aside the book with a sigh of relief. For the first time in my life I had found its pages dull.

Mr. North's next remark surprised me not a little: "You're not married, of course?" he said.

"No," I answered, "but why 'of course?'"

"Then," he continued, disregarding my question, "in describing the relations existing between my wife and myself you drew, I presume, upon your imagination again?"

"Yes," I replied with some enthusiasm, "I pictured to myself the indissoluble union of two souls, bound together by no earthly tie, but merged the one into the other by the sublime alchemy of a divine hand."

"Thank you!" he said drily. "When I want extracts I'll refer to the book itself. You certainly *have* a pretty powerful imagination."

I looked down, coloring a little at the direct compliment.

"You hadn't the pleasure of knowing Hippy, I think?" he asked.

"'Hippy?'" I repeated interrogatively.

"I mean, the late Mrs. North?"

"No," I replied.

"Ah!" he went on in a dreamy way, "you missed a great treat." Then, rousing himself, he leaned forward in his chair, holding the arms firmly so as to prevent himself from falling, and in a hoarse whisper addressed me: "If ever there was a shrew and a termagant born into this world, it was my wife."

The intensity with which the words were spoken bore evidence to their truth. If other proof had been wanted, it would have been found in the expression of hatred and fear apparent on the speaker's face.

To me the shock, although painful, was not altogether unexpected. Already one illusion had been swept away, and now I could bear with a certain degree of calmness the loss of the second.

"My dear sir," I said, "I beg that you will not excite yourself. I think I begin to understand the object of your coming here to-night. Let me assure you that any statement you may desire to make will be not only impartially judged by me but treated as wholly private."

"Private!" he interrupted with an angry wave of his hand.

"Egad, sir, the greater the publicity the better I'll be pleased. You don't suppose I came here merely to set myself right with *you*?"

I thought it prudent to pass over in silence the slur implied by his words. "If I have injured you in any way," I said with chilling courtesy, "I am prepared to do whatever lies in my power to place the matter upon its rightful basis."

My assurance appeared to give Mr. North profound satisfaction. He sat back in his place once more, and after a little preliminary cough began to speak.

"That's all I ask for," he said, "and when I've told you the real facts of the case I shall expect you to make them as widely known as the imaginary details contained in that volume.

"It's very disappointing for you, I admit," he went on, settling down to his story, "but truth compels me to say that I never was anything but a very ordinary happy-go-lucky sort of a mortal. I don't quite understand what is meant by "projecting oneself into the future," but in my case the nearest approach to the process, I take it, was when my father threatened to kick me into the middle of next week on account of some youthful escapade. As to the other complimentary things you have been good enough to say of me, I'm sorry to confess they're quite beyond my comprehension.

"I was always a bit of a harum-scarum fellow; but I never wanted for friends. And these were the days, let me tell you, sir, when a man didn't shrink from his second, or even his third, bottle of wine; and when the nights were all too short for the fun and frolic we sought to crowd into them. Perhaps we weren't so liberally gifted with imaginations as the present generation; but, by gad, sir! we were ready enough to back up our opinions with solid facts if required.

"I was barely thirty when my father died, leaving me a snuggish bit of property. It didn't represent a fortune of course, but the income yielded by it was sufficient for all my wants and a few luxuries over and above. Alas! my seeming good fortune was to prove the cause of my ruin, for from the day on which Hypatia learned the news of my altered circumstances she made up her mind that I should be her husband."

At this point his voice sank to a deep and impressive tone.—

"For ten long years she gave me no peace, following me from place to place with the tenacity of a bloodhound. From the beginning I knew that there was no hope for me, but I died hard. I racked my brain for excuses. I threw obstacle

after obstacle in her way, yet all to no purpose. It was only a question of time, and she knew it. The moment at last came when I could struggle no longer, but found myself forced to yield up my freedom at the altar of the village church.

"Then began for me a life of unutterable misery. The late Mrs. North was a woman of noble proportions, while, as you have possibly observed, I am not myself a Hercules. When, therefore, as was her wont, she placed her back against the door protesting that I should no longer visit my old haunts and cronies, I could not but recognize how vain was the power of prayer to move her from the position.

"I became depressed and moody. All my former buoyancy deserted me; and when by chance I encountered an old acquaintance, I shrank away from his presence out of pure shame.

"Two years passed and my wife fell ill. What the disease was can be of no interest to you, but by the village doctor it was pronounced to be deadly. It was my sad duty," continued the speaker with a curiously comic glance at myself, "to communicate to her the terrible intelligence.

"The habit of obedience had by this time become so engrained in my nature that I did not even dare to take advantage of her helplessness, but remained constantly at her side. Upon this, indeed, she insisted; and as her malady did not confine her to bed I acquiesced in her wishes with my usual alacrity.

"As the end drew near she became imbued with a most unjust suspicion that her death would not be unwelcome to me. I cannot tell you, sir," said the little man with a break in his voice and making believe to wipe away a tear, "how deeply this delusion pained me."

"And now, sir, what do you think the inhuman monster did? You are aware that I had purchased the arsenic to give to the horses. Impressed by the idea I have mentioned, and determined that I should not be left to rejoice in my new-found liberty, she resolved upon poisoning herself, well knowing how fatal to myself the consequences must prove. And, being a woman largely gifted with the courage of her convictions, *she actually did it.*"

Exhausted by the narration of his wrongs, Mr. North paused here. For my own part I hardly knew what to think of so extraordinary a story. In a moment or two, however, he resumed:—



"That, sir, is the truth. *Now* are you convinced of the wrong you have done to me?"

"Yes," I admitted; "your version certainly throws a new light upon the incidents."

"Be assured it is the correct one, and accordingly, sir, I claim the fulfilment of your promise, and ask that you will clear my character from the tissue of falsehood—don't be offended, sir, for it *is* a tissue of falsehood—with which your imagination has interwoven it."

"You mean," I answered somewhat reluctantly, "that I shall place before the public the particulars you have just communicated?"

"Exactly."

I sighed as I thought of my lost ideal; but I had pledged my word. "As you will," I replied. "I promise."

"Good!" he rejoined. Then suddenly changing his subject, "By the way, have you ever noticed the peculiar conformation of that bust above your head?"

"No," I answered, looking in the direction indicated; "I don't know that I have. Perhaps," I suggested, turning again towards him, "it is the effect of——"

I stopped. The chair before me was empty.

## THE HAND OF FATE.

It had rained heavily all the morning, but at noon, through the rifted gray clouds were seen here and there faint gleams of light which deepened until the sky was one glorious expanse of roseate opal and azure, wherein drifted fleecy clouds of pearl, like mists from the celestial city. The voices of ocean blended with the forest hymn in a sublime *Te Deum*.

Newport had never been more beautiful than in this early Autumn time, when September bidding farewell to the flower-laden Summer, comes to usher in golden October, gorgeous in trailing garments of crimson and scarlet, and crowned with fairest of Autumn flowers. The City of the Bay in its quaint and picturesque beauty, was changing her emerald livery for one of rich, deep coloring; and something like quiet succeeded to the fashionable gayety of the Summer season.

Near the old, ruined Fort Louis, at the entrance to the harbor, in sight of Fort Adams, of "Purgatory" and "Hanging Rocks," "Spouting Cave," and "The Glen," is a charming, rock-bound retreat, where repose on this Autumn day two gentlemen, Gerald Kenneth and Harold Percival. The former, a famous artist, the latter his most intimate friend, and a distinguished journalist.

Both gentlemen in *négligé* Summer attire, are, in an apparently idle way plying their different vocations. Gerald before an improvised easel, is working fitfully upon an ideal face, beautiful in outline, while Harold in a shady nook near by is occupied with note-book and pencil, pausing frequently to look out over the blue waters of the harbor, or scan with quick brown eyes the artistic work of his friend, whose steady grey orbs, take a warmer, softer light when lifted in reply.

No idle dreamer, this artist, but an enthusiastic worker in the field where he has chosen his life work. Impulsive it may be, yet strong, unwavering, and self-reliant. Soon, with an impatient gesture, he throws aside his crayon, saying in answer to an inquiring look from his friend,

"It is of no use! I cannot create a hand worthy my ideal woman. Oh for a model! Yet I might as well wish for the

woman herself," he added, as turning he began to collect his artist's materials preparatory to returning to the Hotel.

A light wind carried several sketches from his open portfolio, across the grass, and down almost to the water's edge. He had reclaimed them, and was hastening back, when he suddenly stopped, attracted by an impression in the fine, soft clay, of a lady's hand, and lower portion of the arm, perfect in form, on which distinctly visible, as though from an engraved bracelet, were the initials, "E. M."

"Percival," the artist called, "Percival, see here! I have made a discovery which would almost renew my faith in the wishing-stone, and the fairies." And the two, evincing considerable curiosity, for a sex which disclaims having any, intently examined this odd piece of sculpture in its perfection of detail.

"By Jove! I should like to see the fair owner of that hand;" Gerald exclaimed enthusiastically. "'Tis perfect as to form, and the lines of the palm as clear and distinct as in the hand itself. I must make a faithful copy of it while I may."

And Gerald with true artist enthusiasm for the beautiful, hastily produced his drawing materials, and proceeded to transfer to paper the ideal hand in all its detail, even to the initials on the bracelet, which, as he said, might prove a talisman to guide him to the ideal woman herself.

"She probably left on the boat an hour ago," replied Harold, with a man's tantalizing mode of conveying unwished-for information. "Yes, she undoubtedly went to-day, all the pretty girls did, but whether to New York or Boston, is of course uncertain. I shall think of you during the Fall and Winter as engaged in a mad search for the ideal woman. Poor, deluded, fellow! that is what comes of being an artist. An editor's fanciful pictures are bad enough I will admit, but when it comes to

Dreams,

Which are the children of an idle brain,  
Begot of nothing but vain fantasy,

why, commend me to the artist."

And Harold striking a theatrical attitude, bent on the rapidly sketching artist, a look of mock pity, quite unheeded. "Better carry home the clay-bank," continued the tormentor with forced gravity. "The hand itself is only clay in a different form you know."

"Come, come, old fellow!" replied Gerald in half jesting,



half annoyed tone, "stop quizzing, or I shall cry sour grapes. I dare say if *you* had made the fortunate discovery, we should have been treated to the most thrilling romance from your pen, as with beating heart and anxious step you sought the fair unknown, so near and yet so far."

"Perhaps," returned Harold laughing, "though I do not think romancing my forte. Does this look like it?" and he held up a tablet on which were notes for an article on "Scientific Research."

Three months later, and in cosy, bachelor apartments in New York, Gerald and Harold review the Autumn's pleasure. The light rings of blue smoke curl gracefully round their heads, and float away into space, while arise fairy castles, some alas only to vanish with the fleeting vapor, while others become substantial and beautiful realities.

Harold, in comfortable easy-chair before the grate fire, his feet on the fender, is revising page after page of manuscript, while Gerald is seated at a table whereon rests his drawing of the unknown hand, beside it an open book, and these claim his undivided attention.

"The 'Psychic Hand.' That's it! That's it!" he suddenly exclaims. "The most perfect hand of all. 'The palm of medium size. The fingers without knots, the thumb small and well shaped. The possessors of this type are guided by, and worship the ideal, striving after purity and right in the abstract.'"

"At it again," said Harold, with a glance of mock despair, in the direction of the interested student; "I really think his discovery has given him quite as much trouble as America did Columbus. I say, Kenneth,—"

"Yes, 'to be really good, the Line of the Heart ought to rise on the Mount of Jupiter, which is the elevation 'neath the index finger, crossing the hand, clear and well colored; its length indicating the depth and quality of attachment,'" Gerald reads aloud.

"I say, Kenneth, don't be such a fool!" said Harold, bringing down his chair with energy sufficient to elicit a response. "What *is* the use of losing your head over such nonsense?"

"That you cannot comprehend, neither can I tell you," responded Gerald, for the first time looking up from his book; "but I have a strange, scarcely defined impression that this unknown hand is in some mysterious way, connected with my fate; and hence I am determined to read its history—turn

chiromant in fact—and if there is anything in the science—and I believe there is—why, I shall know my fair undiscovered one before we meet, as meet we shall some day. I feel it—am confident of it!”

The earnest conviction of his tone awoke a corresponding echo in Harold's mind, and laying down his manuscript he went over to the table, and listened with something more than feigned interest, as Gerald proceeded to read the mystic hand.

“Of course I labor at a disadvantage,” he said, “as color, which means considerable, is wanting here; yet I may partially read the story of the palm, having made a faithful copy from the impression in the clay. And first notice this line surrounding the mount of the thumb, called the ‘Mount of Venus.’ It is the ‘Line of Life;’ and long, clear, and well defined, as it is in this model, it signifies a long and happy life. Cross-lines traversing the Life Line indicate maladies, the nature of which is determined by their position. For instance, cross-lines extending from the Mount of Venus, indicate ills arising from unhappy affection, and the same is indicated if cross-lines extend from the Line of the Heart. Cross-lines extending from the Line of the Head, signify brain-trouble; and if from the centre of the hand, troubles of a material nature; and so on. The Line of the Head, often joins the Line of Life at the commencement—you see it does here; but the two lines soon separate, the Life Line passing round the thumb, and the Head Line traversing the palm near the centre, sometimes sloping downward at its termination. This Line, of good length and color, indicates intelligence, self-reliance, etc. If it descend much on the Mount of the Moon—which is the elevation at the outer, lower portion of the hand—dire misfortune, insanity, or death by drowning is threatened.”

Then turning to the chart, “Heavens that is the indication here. Perhaps even now she is the victim of some fatal disaster. Who knows?”

And Gerald with a shudder, pushed aside the drawing, as though loth to continue his investigations. After a moment, however, he again took up the book saying,—

“Oh, there are undoubtedly mistakes here, as everywhere else, and I do not believe my fair unknown is any more *non compos mentis* than you or I are at this moment—probably not so much so. At this hour she is, I fancy, dreaming of me;” and laughing he turned again to the mysterious hand, saying,

“This line, the Line of the Heart crossing the palm beneath

the Mounts of the Fingers, when rising as it does here at the Mount of Jupiter, and crossing the hand in clear, well formed line, is of good signification, indicating deep and lasting attachment. This promises well for me, does it not? See, old fellow, she is as true as steel, if this is any indication. Constant and devoted, what more could any man ask for? But here is another bad omen. A meeting of the Head, Heart, and Life Lines under the index finger : which signifies a violent death, provided the right hand corroborates the left in this union of the three lines. But how am I to tell? only one hand is here—the left—and the missing right hand, after all, holds the secret of life or death. Did you ever know of anything so exasperating?"

"Yes, several things," returned Harold drily. "But don't look so cut up about it, man. It is all a delusion and a snare, take my word for it."

Gerald only shook his head, as he turned once more to the mystic chart. "Halloo!" he exclaimed, "here is some palliation. Good fortune predicted by a forking or parting of the Heart Line under Jupiter. Now I *am* in a dilemma, and no way of extricating myself until I find the missing hand.

"Merciful Heavens!" ejaculated Harold fervently. "What will become of the man if he is interested in *two* hands? One has almost upset his reason."

Here he was interrupted by another exclamation from Gerald. "Another 'indication' I presume?" he queried.

"Yes, and one which puzzles me too. Here is a star upon the Mount of the Moon, which signifies either dissimulation, or misfortune; it may be a violent death. Which do you suppose it is?"

"Probably all three," replied Harold, coolly knocking the ashes from his cigar, "and the indications are that there will be two victims instead of one. It passes all comprehension how a sensible fellow like you can be so deluded."

But Gerald, unheeding, pursued his investigations, muttering, "A star usually; but on Mount of Jupiter, it means successful love or ambition. The cross is generally an ill omen, but on Jupiter it indicates a happy union. There, that is something more like it. But what troubles me, is that confounded 'violent death;' and if it is coming, why, the happy marriage is of no account."

And Gerald, really disconcerted, arose from the table, and lighting a cigar, threw himself into an easy-chair, opposite



Harold, who had returned to his manuscript, thoroughly out of patience with what he termed his friend's emotional insanity. But somewhat appeased at Gerald's approach he remarked, with a slight elevation of his eyebrows :

"So you have come back to earth, have you? and to your senses as well, I hope."

"See here, Percival!" said the artist, half apologetically, "I do not think we are justified in condemning a thing, simply because we fail to understand it; and if the skilled naturalist from a single member may determine the age and genus of the animal; from a single scale, the species of the fish; is it more strange to suppose that given the hand—man's member of action—we may determine the general characteristics, life, and destiny of the individual? I think not. The phrenologist will from the brain and its development disclose the individual qualities. The physiognomist reads the character from the face, and why not an equally faithful record from the hand? And think you that men like Hartlieb, Gall, Lavater, D'Arpentigny, and Desbarrolles would devote their talents to a mere chimera?"

"I cannot say that they would. But, my dear fellow, why torment yourself with one? Granted all you say of the science to be true, of what avail is it? You might search the world over, and be just as far from finding the fair unknown as you are at the present moment. And to me your unaccountable fancy seems a mere waste of time and talents. That is all; and I don't like to see you making yourself uncomfortable over a myth."

"I should be almost tempted to call it that myself," returned Gerald smiling, "were it not for yonder drawing. And, laugh as you may, I cannot yet relinquish my idea or hope of some day meeting 'E. M.,' though I do not propose to give up business, and go in mad pursuit. So rest assured there, my dear fellow. But I will make a wager with you—anything you like—that within a year I shall clasp the other hand. You may smile at my assurance, but our presentiments sometimes prove realities; and as I have often told you, I shall yet find the ideal woman; but whether the inmate of an asylum, or the victim of a railroad disaster, I leave you to conjecture, and time alone will tell."

"You may recognize her in the bride of one of your friends," remarked Harold drily. "That *would* be unfortunate."

"Extremely so, unless beholding her, I should feel eternally grateful to the man who stood at the altar in my place," Gerald laughingly retorted. "But of course, she is an angel."

"All women are, Kenneth, or according to the romantic doctrine of affinities, every woman is somebody's angel—which is perhaps a better way of putting it."

One morning, shortly after the above conversation, the two gentlemen were riding in a Broadway stage *en route* for business, when Harold, who was engrossed in his newspaper, felt his arm convulsively seized, and Gerald whispered excitedly,

"Look! There in the corner of the stage. The very initials. At last I have found her."

"Not quite so fast, my dear fellow, you forget there are many 'E. M.'s,' and not one chance in a thousand that this one is yours. 'Go ahead slowly.'"

The lady whose initialed shopping-bag had created such commotion in the mind of the young artist, sat, as he said, in the corner of the stage, seemingly oblivious of her surroundings. Her face—the day being stormy—was enveloped in a thick veil, through which was discernible a pair of bright, dark eyes.

"Yes," so ran Gerald's mental revery, "she is undoubtedly my fair Newport Naiad. I wish she would lift her veil. But of course she is pretty; one could tell that at a glance; young too; and her hands, so persistently encased in that seal muff; why does she not withdraw them that I may be convinced?"

So he queried undisturbed, for Harold, after a passing glance at the petite stylish lady in black silk and seal skin, had returned to his newspaper, so deeply engrossed in a leading editorial that he heeded nothing that was passing around him, until a sudden lurch of the stage at stopping caused him to raise his eyes in time to see enter an elderly lady, who with a pleased ejaculation of surprise at meeting, seated herself beside the fair unknown in the corner, saying in a brusque, cheery way,

"My dear Edith, I am delighted to see you. When did you return? I heard, when you went abroad last Summer, that you were to remain away a year. How is your husband? The children are well I suppose."

Abroad last Fall—husband, children. Gerald's countenance changed suddenly from confident gratification to a bewil-

dered indifference, as Harold, scarcely able to repress his amusement, quoted softly from Thackeray :

“ My lady comes at last,  
Timid, and stepping fast,  
And hastening hither  
With modest eyes downcast.  
She comes,—she’s here, she’s past,  
May Heaven go with her.”

The week following, a brilliant reception was given at one of the palatial homes on Fifth Avenue, in honor of a distinguished foreigner. And among the guests were Gerald Kenneth and Harold Percival. The former—lionized as the talented young artist whose latest work, recently hung upon the Academy walls—was attracting the popular attention. It bore the name of “The Hand of Fate,” and represented a flower-framed casement, with its draperies of brocade and gold falling gracefully around the form of a beautiful woman; one hand concealed in the folds of the heavy curtain, while the other in all its perfection of form and coloring, seemed beckoning to one unseen who waits without.

The face, only partially revealed, is more a suggestion of loveliness than actual representation ; and the golden, roseate beauty of sunrise rests like a halo upon the waving hair until its purple shadows are lighted with amber, and through the open window one catches a glimpse of distant scenery, suggesting the Newport harbor.

The artist’s effort was certainly regarded a masterpiece, and perhaps its chief beauty lay in its suggestiveness, a mysterious something, undefined, and yet giving additional charm to the realities of the picture.

But to return to the artist himself, who moves gaily amid this select assemblage, his eyes continually roving as if in search of some one. The brown-stone palace with its magnificent accessories might almost have reminded one of the far-famed palace of the Alhambra. Portières of costly fabric and elaborate design separated only in name, not effect, the various apartments, which in royal magnificence might successfully rival many an Oriental palace ; and surpassing all as a realm of beauty, the conservatory redolent with the incense ascending from flower-chalice. Silver lamps with prisms of cut crystal, were suspended amid the floral luxuriance, casting a soft, mellow light over the enchanted scene, while in sweet accord with the dreamy strains of Strauss, was heard the faint



musical murmur of a fountain, in whose marble basin gold-fish disported, beneath a spray which caught the reflection of iridescent lights, and sparkled with rainbow splendor.

In this veritable bit of Eden, where the air was heavy with the sweetness of rare exotics, near a stained glass window through which smiled the moon, stands Gerald Kenneth beside a sylph-like form in shimmering silk and lace, whose snowy lustre is unrelieved save at the graceful throat where gleams the roseate fire of the opal.

Gerald is speaking earnestly, and the face just uplifted to his, answers, with a half amused, half interested expression. his eager queries.

"At Newport, did you say? Oh yes, I have been there; it was only last Summer and in early Autumn."

Here Gerald started perceptibly, as with increased eagerness he inquired if she remembered a certain Glen? naming the one where he had found the impression of the hand in the clay.

"Oh yes!" she replied, "quite well. I was there the very day I left Newport. It is a romantic spot down there by the cliff, and, of course, has its legend. Did you not hear it? How two faithful lovers resolved, rather than be parted, to die together, but just as they were about to take the fatal leap from the cliff, they were interrupted by a messenger who brought tidings of the removal of the barrier which separated them—I did not learn what it was—and so, instead of dying together, they lived together, happily married."

"How long ago did all this happen?" asked Gerald.

"Oh years since; the lovers must have found Heaven in reality ere this. But there is another romance of later date, which occurred only last year. Such a sad story!" and the laughing, blue eyes grew grave and thoughtful. "A beautiful young girl was drowned at the foot of the cliff; accidentally, they thought."

"Merciful Heavens!" exclaimed Gerald with excitement, recalling his ideal hand, and the prophecy or indication that its possessor might meet with a violent death. "What if this lovely girl was my ideal woman," he thought with a pang. "Her name?" he asked with strange eagerness of his fair companion.

"I do not remember it," she answered, wondering, at the unusual interest manifested. "Did you know of the young lady?"

"No, no I think not!" replied Gerald hastily, with an

effort to return to his former light and easy manner ; but more affected by the sad circumstance than he wished to admit, even to himself. "Not at all probable," he murmured under his breath. "My ideal woman is still on the earth. Of course she is. But who knows?"

And annoyed by the doubt which he could not solve, he turned to the sweet-faced girl beside him, thinking how pleasant it would be were his search ended, the ideal found. At the same instant he saw, what had before escaped his notice, upon the fair, rounded arm of his *vis-à-vis*, a jeweled bracelet of rare and antique design, bearing the initials "E. M."

"The bracelet ; you like it ?" asked his pretty companion, noting the intensity of his scrutiny, and thinking what a very odd man was this talented young artist, with his interesting enthusiasm.

"Like it ? Oh, yes ! it is a charming trinket ; but the initials, they are not yours ?" inquiringly.

"Indeed they are ; why not, pray ? I see you do not know who you are talking to," she added with fascinating naïveté.

"I am afraid not," he returned laughingly. "I understood your name at our introduction to be Miss Day."

"Then you surely are wrong. But I forgive you, for the two names are almost alike. I am Miss May—Eloise May."

Another start, accompanied by a very earnest, "Indeed ?" while the young lady wondered if all artists were as incomprehensible as the one before her, with his sudden starts and earnest ejaculations.

Gerald in the meantime, felt himself on the border of a new discovery, questioning in his own mind, if it could be possible that his search was indeed ended, the ideal woman standing beside him ? He could not, of course, ask her, but only one glance at the fair hand so sedulously hidden by her glove, would convince him ; and here fate was propitious. An opportunity being offered which answered beyond all doubt his query. The young lady heated with dancing wished an ice, and moved by some fortunate fancy, removed her gloves while eating it. Had she noticed the start her companion gave then, I think she would have had some doubts as to his sanity, for he bent eagerly forward, his steadfast gaze riveted upon the hand in process of uncovering, as he muttered half aloud, "Wonder if it is !"

"How very absent-minded he is," thought Miss May, as she queried, "Did you speak, Mr. Kenneth ?"

"Yes—no—that is, I was thinking of a favorite study of mine," he replied, making a bold resolve to decide the all-important question then and there.

"And what is that if I may ask?"

"Chiromancy. 'Tis a fascinating pastime, as well as most interesting study. Have you ever investigated it?"

"Never! But tell me about it, do. Read my fate please." And of her own accord she did what Gerald most wished her to do—presented her hand for inspection.

"Is it I wonder. Can it be?" and he almost wished it were. He took the dimpled hand, its fair owner little dreaming how much depended upon what he should read there. But at the first glance he was answered. Was he glad or sorry?

"A good fortune remember," she said smiling up at him. "No blighted affections or broken heart for me?"

He was silent a moment, studying with eager minuteness each line in the rosy palm. Then he said gravely, "I never saw a hand like yours before."

She little knew what a world of meaning that one short sentence conveyed. Ah Gerald! that Hand of Fate, *when* will you find it, and *how*?

One evening in the early Spring-time, Gerald and Harold were having their usual after-dinner chat, with the "care-soothing cigar," when Harold, suddenly looking up from a newspaper he was idly conning, said abruptly, "By the way, Kenneth, Moore's sister died yesterday. You remember seeing her? A pretty little thing. And as they are comparative strangers in this cold, heartless city of ours, I think we ought to attend the funeral. I must do so at least, as I had a note from Moore, asking me to be one of the pall-bearers, and I wouldn't like to refuse him, poor fellow. Let me look at the obituary notice, and learn the hour. Here it is, 'Evangeline Moore, aged twenty; service at two.' It seems hard, doesn't it, that one so young and happy should be taken?—But what is the matter, Kenneth?" for Gerald's face wore a startled expression of wonder, which his friend was puzzled to account for.

"Nothing! Nothing is the matter. Why do you ask?" answered Gerald, assuming once more his habitual manner and expression. "I was thinking: that was all."

"Seems to me you do that frequently," returned Harold. "You are most of the time lost in meditation."

Gerald did not reply. The truth was, that at mention of the



dead girl's name, his mind reverted at once to those mysterious initials. But he had almost ceased to refer to them, since the experience related above, the recital of which Harold had enjoyed immensely, but it only made him ridicule the more what he was pleased to term his friend's hallucination of the heart. And as the said bantering was not at all in accord with Gerald's own feelings, he wisely concluded to say no more about them. But this very silence may have strengthened his thought. And when the next day he stood beside the white, flower-laden casket, and gazed upon the beautiful form, whose pure spirit was e'en then in Paradise,—as he beheld the snowy hands whose earthly work was finished, holding white blossoms over the pulseless breast,—his heart uttered a fervent prayer of thanksgiving that it was not his loved one so early taken away.

Oh happy human heart, so long as thou canst utter "not mine!" More blessed yet if, when the loss comes, thou may'st say "still mine." The first is transient joy, the second joy eternal.

Spring, the season of Hope, also the season of Memory, has departed, and in her place Summer reigns, a Tropical Queen, in all her warmth and brightness. Beautiful, it may be in the country where the golden sunlight falls with a soft, uncertain shadow, through the leafy, emerald sheen; and one hears the cool ripple of the meadow brook. All nature fresh and charming. How still and peaceful! How bright and glorious! Sunshine and flowers everywhere. But Summer in New York is quite a different thing. How the heat scorches and withers. And instead of the music of the brook, only the din and conflict of the city, its toil and turmoil. How worn and tired every one looks. And the children droop like fading flowers. No health-laden breezes to cool the stifling atmosphere, only the poisoned breath that withers and destroys.

"Dreadful! isn't it?" said Harold, seeking in vain for a comfortable spot in their boarding-house apartments. "How glad I shall be to leave this heated atmosphere, and breathe once more the fresh, pure air of mountain, or sea resort. Where shall we go, old fellow? It makes little difference to me, and if you have a preference—any special attraction—why, I am at your service. What do you say to Newport again?"

Gerald ventured, not without a secret misgiving that Harold might divine the motive in his suggestion; namely, a wish to continue his search for the fair unknown.

But if his friend had any surmises, he wisely refrained from giving them expression, merely glancing at Gerald, who was seemingly absorbed in removing a speck of dust from his coat-sleeve, as he said in matter-of-fact way :

“Agreed. The place will suit me as well as any other ; and if you prefer it, we will make arrangements accordingly.”

Thus the matter was settled : with what result we shall see hereafter.

“Two shall be born the whole wide world apart,  
And speak in different tongues, and have no thought  
Each of the other's being, and no heed.  
And these, o'er unknown seas to unknown lands  
Shall cross, escaping wreck, defying death,  
And all unconsciously shape every act,  
And bend each wandering step to this one end,  
That one day out of darkness they shall meet,  
And read Life's meaning in each other's eyes.  
And two shall walk some narrow way of Life,  
So nearly side by side that should one turn,  
Ever so little space to left or right  
They must needs acknowledge face to face ;—  
And yet with wistful eyes that never meet,  
With groping hands that never clasp, and lips  
Calling to ears that never hear,  
They seek each other all their weary days,  
And die unsatisfied.—And this is Fate.”

The last of August finds Gerald Kenneth and Harold Percival once more domiciled at Newport. the charming City of the Bay.

“Who is here Kenneth? any more E. M.'s?” asked Harold one day of his friend.

“If so, you may rest assured I shall find them,” returned Gerald laughingly. “But as yet, my most arduous search has only revealed Maudes, Annies, and Lilians, with a Dora and an Irene. Oh, fair unknown ! where art thou?”

“Too early seen, unknown, and known too late,” quoted Harold. “In all probability, my dear fellow, your charming ideal, if she exist, is long since wedded to the other man.” With which pleasing reflection, Mr. Percival complacently stroked his brown moustache, and returned to the ever present notebook.

“Wish I could get him intensely interested in a like subject,” muttered Gerald. “I should then have a companion in my wanderings of fancy. But I fear, as he once expressed it, that he is not given to that sort of thing. At all events, pretty girls

and their mammas have sighed in vain. His heart is simply impervious."

"What are you chattering about, Kenneth?" called Harold from the window.

"Merely surmising as to the state of your lordship's affections," was the laughing reply.

"Better not," was the half-serious answer. "Find your ideal woman, and I am ready with the paternal blessing, but as for me," with a sigh, "*J'avais une seule amie; elle est partie.*" So think no more about it." And as if to avoid further conversation, Harold turned to the table, and was soon busily engaged in writing.

The following afternoon the two gentlemen were driving at the fashionable hour, when Bellevue Avenue was crowded with splendid equipages, containing the beauty and wealth of this famous resort. Viewing the gay assembly one seemed to forget the working-day world, and live only in the holiday pleasure and freedom from care.

Gerald and Harold were enjoying to the utmost their brief respite from business perplexities, and this afternoon, the perfection of a closing Summer day, they had devoted to a general survey of the city and its surroundings; visiting the "old stone mill," that picturesque antiquity claimed to have been built before the arrival of Columbus, by the Northmen; from there to that popular and charming resort Touro Park, a bequest of Judah Touro; and finally to Bellevue Avenue, where they mingled with the gay throng passing and repassing; noting with interest the many phases of life there presented, from the sweet débutante, fresh and fair, to the world-weary paterfamilias who, worth his millions, seems to have reached the desired goal too late to enjoy it.

"By Jove! Percival, there is a pretty girl!" exclaimed the artist enthusiastically.

Harold, looking in the direction indicated, beheld in stylish equipage two ladies, the younger one, as Gerald had said, "charming." Yet not with mere beauty of form and coloring, but that higher type which embodies soul and expression. She was talking animatedly with her companion, an elderly, elegant woman, seemingly a relative or chaperone. Her fair face was flushed with the gay excitement of the drive, and her dark eyes one moment soft and luminous, the next laughing and sparkling at some *bon mot* of her friend.

"I think I know who they are," Harold said after a mo-



ment's pause. The elderly lady's husband [a marked emphasis upon elderly], is, I believe, Mr. Laurie, of the 'Stock Exchange,' enormously wealthy. The young lady is a niece of theirs."

"Her name also Laurie?"

"Yes I infer so," Harold returned carelessly. "'Tis said she will come in for a good share of old Laurie's millions. But *je ne sais*. Lovely? Yes externally at least."

"What a skeptic you are, Percival," laughed Gerald. "I believe you would have doubts regarding an angel from Heaven."

"Most assuredly, as I should doubt the ability of an angel to breathe this sordid atmosphere, stifling even to us who are 'of the earth, earthy.' But no matter, the sun is saying 'good-night,' and we had best follow his example and return to the hotel for dinner; after which our cigars and a starlight stroll."

"An invitation for you, Kenneth," said Harold one morning a week later. "A select party are going to row over to the Glen to-morrow afternoon, have supper and return by moonlight, which will suit even your romantic ideas, I think. And the place of rendezvous is the most charming spot imaginable, weird and picturesque in the extreme; about a mile and a half down the shore, at the foot of Wild Cliff. The small steamer and a number of skiffs have been chartered, and every arrangement made for the comfort and pleasure of the guests invited. Of course you'll go; but leave your heart at home, you might find it inconvenient. Did I tell you that Mrs. Laurie and her fair niece are to be of the party? I ascertained for your special benefit."

"Exceedingly obliged to you, I am sure."

The next afternoon at four, all was in readiness, and the pleasure-seekers, after a delightful sail, were exploring the beauties of the Glen. The young people strolling off in little groups, while the chaperons of the party with their attendants, prepared the festive board upon the greensward.

Before leaving the hotel Gerald had obtained an introduction to Mrs. Laurie, who, turning, presented him to her niece, and Harold now surveyed the couple at a little distance seated upon the mossy trunk of a fallen tree, laughing and chatting in that easy, self-possessed way which distinguishes two persons of the world who suddenly find themselves congenial. He said nothing, but happening to catch his friend's eye, answered with a merry glance, which seemed to say, "Now if she

only possessed those mysterious initials, we should have another episode."

The afternoon and early evening passed swiftly, delightfully, and at eight o'clock preparations were commenced for the return sail. All was in readiness for departure, when it was proposed that a number of the party should return in the skiffs by a more circuitous route, in order to view a picturesque cliff, said to be weirdly charming by moonlight.

The *Eleanor* started in advance, Harold and two young ladies went in the first boat; an engaged couple in the next; other couples came after; and, whether by accident or design, Gerald and his fair companion were left to follow in the last skiff, which moved on the water impatiently, as though longing to be away.

The deep, white-crested waves of the harbor, with ceaseless ebb and flow, caught the reflection of moonlight and starlight, and broke into a thousand quivering, rainbow prisms, while far out on the water, from the declivity facing the harbor, shone the beacon lights of the city.

Gerald, with deferential chivalry, assisted his companion into the boat; yet seemed in no haste to overtake the rest of the party, who had preceded them. And when they reached the appointed place, beautiful beyond description in its baptism of golden moonlight, the others were still in advance.

"How perfect! How entrancing," she exclaimed, deeply moved by the grandeur of the scene, while Gerald answered with true artist enthusiasm, "More than beautiful, it is sublime!"

He had paused in his rowing, and for a few moments both were silent, lost in contemplation of the scene before them. Then Gerald turning, noticed at the horizon a long, dark line, which seemed, as it advanced, to extinguish the starlight. His companion's glance followed his.

"Are you a good sailor?" he asked, pointing significantly over the water, while in the distance they heard the sound of merry voices, and some one singing from a serenade—

"The air was sweet with tender meaning,  
The flowers were shedding perfumes rare;  
The silent stars afar were gleaming,  
The moonlight wrought a golden snare."

"I apprehend no danger," Gerald said; "though perhaps we had best hasten our return. Are you timid?"

"Not at all," she answered smiling, "I love the sea too much to realize how cruel it may be."

As she spoke a sudden breeze tossed the waves about them, the sky grew threateningly overcast, while over the harbor resounded the first peal of low, indistinct thunder, like the far-away voice of distant cannon. And they noticed the pleasure-seekers ahead of them, hastening to escape the rapidly approaching storm.

Gerald, thoroughly self-reliant and composed, devoted all his energies to the management of their light skiff, so frail a barque in the midst of angry waters. And his fair companion, perfectly calm, sat at the end of the boat, her white robe gleaming through the darkness. Her lovely face uplifted, and the large, dreamy eyes gazing, more with admiring awe than fear, at the mighty power of the Storm King. The spray dashed over her, drenching the light fabric which she wore, and the wind lifted her waving hair in his rough hand, tossing it back from the white forehead, with its delicate tracery of blue.

Gerald's lips were firmly compressed, and it required his utmost effort to guide their frail barque amid the seething, dark waters threatening to engulf them; though to this fear neither gave utterance, both silent, facing the impending danger, seeking strength to meet it, and feeling near to each other, although only newly met. Is it not often so, that two persons passing together through some great crisis or peril, feel that nearness which else could only come from long association or true affection?

Darker, wilder, grew the storm; awful in its grandeur, the power and grandeur of desolation. Shrouded as they were in the heavy mist and darkness, Gerald sought in vain to distinguish the other voyagers, and his voice was drowned in the requiem of wind and wave. One superhuman effort might save them, he thought, but the angry billows seemed to pursue them with relentless fury. And at last one larger, stronger than the rest swept completely over them.

The frail craft made one final effort of resistance to the force that would destroy her, but the greater strength prevailed, and she sank overturned in the dark waves which seemed to laugh aloud in exultant mockery over the vanquished. Gerald felt the cold, claspings close round them, and for an instant seemed lost to action. Then hearing the entreating cry



of his companion as she struggled neath the waves, he struck boldly out to the rescue.

"Courage, I am coming!" he shouted as well as circumstances would permit. "I am called a good swimmer, and will save you yet."

Here the white robe appeared for one brief instant upon the surface of the water, but ere he could reach it, it was again swallowed up in the dark abyss beneath them.

"Heaven help me!" Gerald murmured hoarsely, "or I shall lose her. She has sunk for the second time."

One superhuman effort more, a despairing cry "Lost! lost!" and Gerald groping wildly in the darkness, seizes the floating white raiment as it rises for the last time. And a moment later she is lying unconscious in his arms. He feels then his own strength failing, and shudders lest even now it be too late.

No! no! it cannot be! So near the shore he can distinguish anxious voices, he fancies, calling to him. His fleeting strength seems strangely renewed, and holding the seemingly lifeless form, feeling it dear to him, he might not say why, he again makes one mighty effort, for life or death. "How dark," he murmurs; a dull, confusing sound is in his ears, and he fancies seeing indistinct forms moving before him. Then they vanish; a delicious sensation of happy rest is stealing over him. "Are we in Heaven?" he murmurs. Then all is darkness and oblivion.

When Gerald once more opened his eyes, he was lying in his own apartment at the Hotel, Harold's kindly, anxious face bending over him. "Where am I? What has happened," he asked in a bewildered way, and Harold, rejoiced at his friend's recovery, answers gaily, "Only this my dear fellow, you have saved the life of Evelyn Meredith. Accept my congratulations."

"Evelyn Meredith? you mean Miss Laurie," returned Gerald, sitting up.

"No I don't, for she is Mr. Laurie's sister's child. Those mysterious initials again, old fellow! So recruit as soon as possible, and favor us with another episode. The young lady is doing well, and has sent to inquire for you. The indications are," he continued mischievously, "That at last your search may be ended."

In a private parlor of the hotel, Miss Meredith receives her brave preserver, the young artist, who, quite recovered from

the ill effects of their shipwreck, hastens to learn in person regarding his fair companion of that eventful night.

She receives him cordially, with many expressions of gratitude for his heroism in her behalf, and regrets, that it should so have disabled him. And Gerald, making light of the obligation, sees new beauty in the lovely face before him, flushed with the memory of danger past, and the excitement of the moment, while a new light shines in her wondrous eyes. Then for the first time recalling those mysterious initials, he notices the small white hand, so frankly placed within his own at meeting.

"'Tis the same," he murmurs; then aloud, "Pardon me, Miss Meredith, but I have just made an important discovery." And he then related to her the story of the hand in the clay, and his search for the original—fruitless until the present moment. "Oh right hand so long sought," he said smiling, "will you not assure me of the truth of the story told by your companion?"

"Surely a slight return for my indebtedness to you," she answered, placing both hands in his for inspection. And he read them aloud. The right hand of *action*, the left hand of *thought*. Finding both in harmony, and the double narrative a roseate prophecy.

Three months later, and in the drawing-room of Mr. Laurie's palatial home on Fifth Avenue, stand Gerald Kenneth and Evelyn Meredith, and as the young artist, pursuing his favorite study, bends over a fair hand, where he has just placed a gleaming opal, pledge of betrothal, he says earnestly, reading once more the rosy palm—

"No 'dire misfortune,' or 'violent death' here. The threatened danger, thank Heaven, I averted. Found at last! Evelyn, my darling, it was the Hand of Fate, and to what blessed guerdon it hath brought me.

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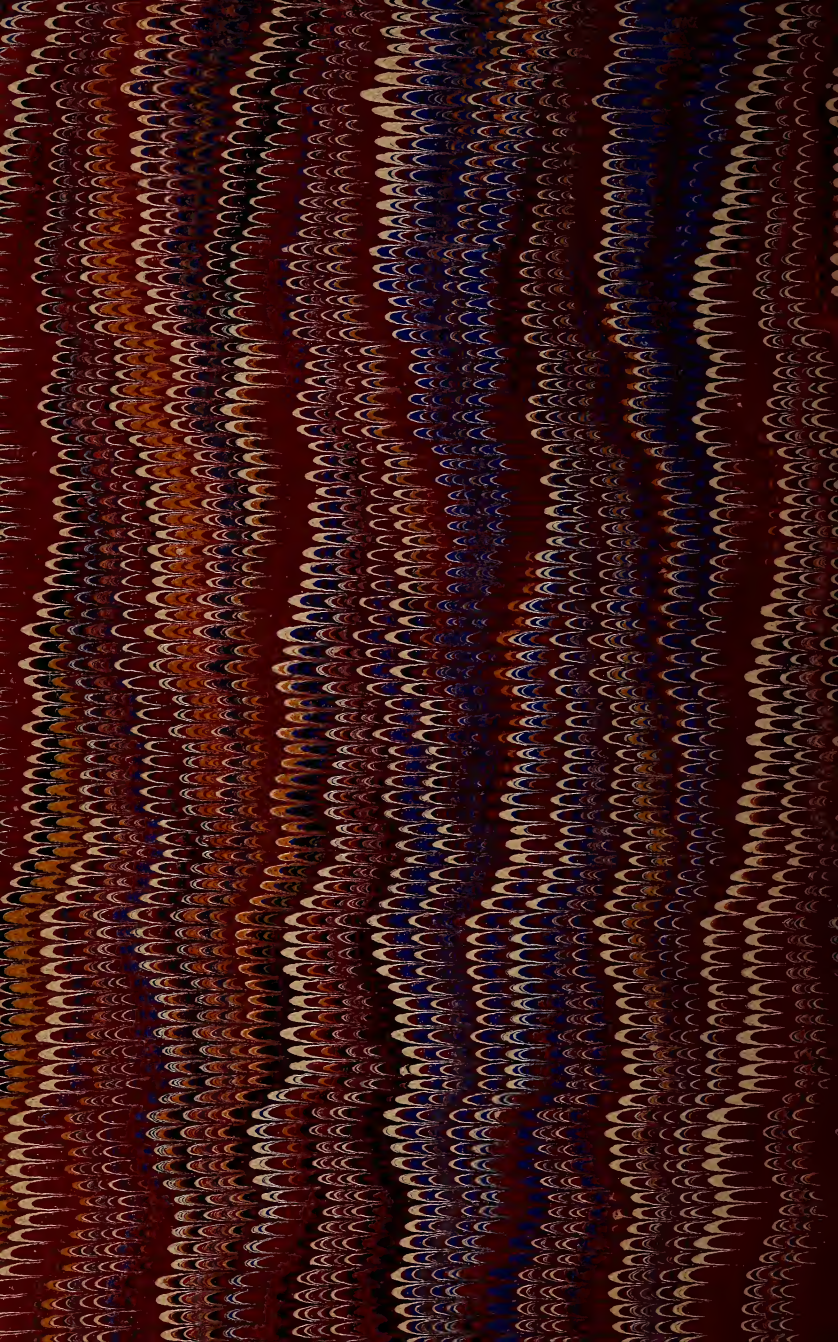




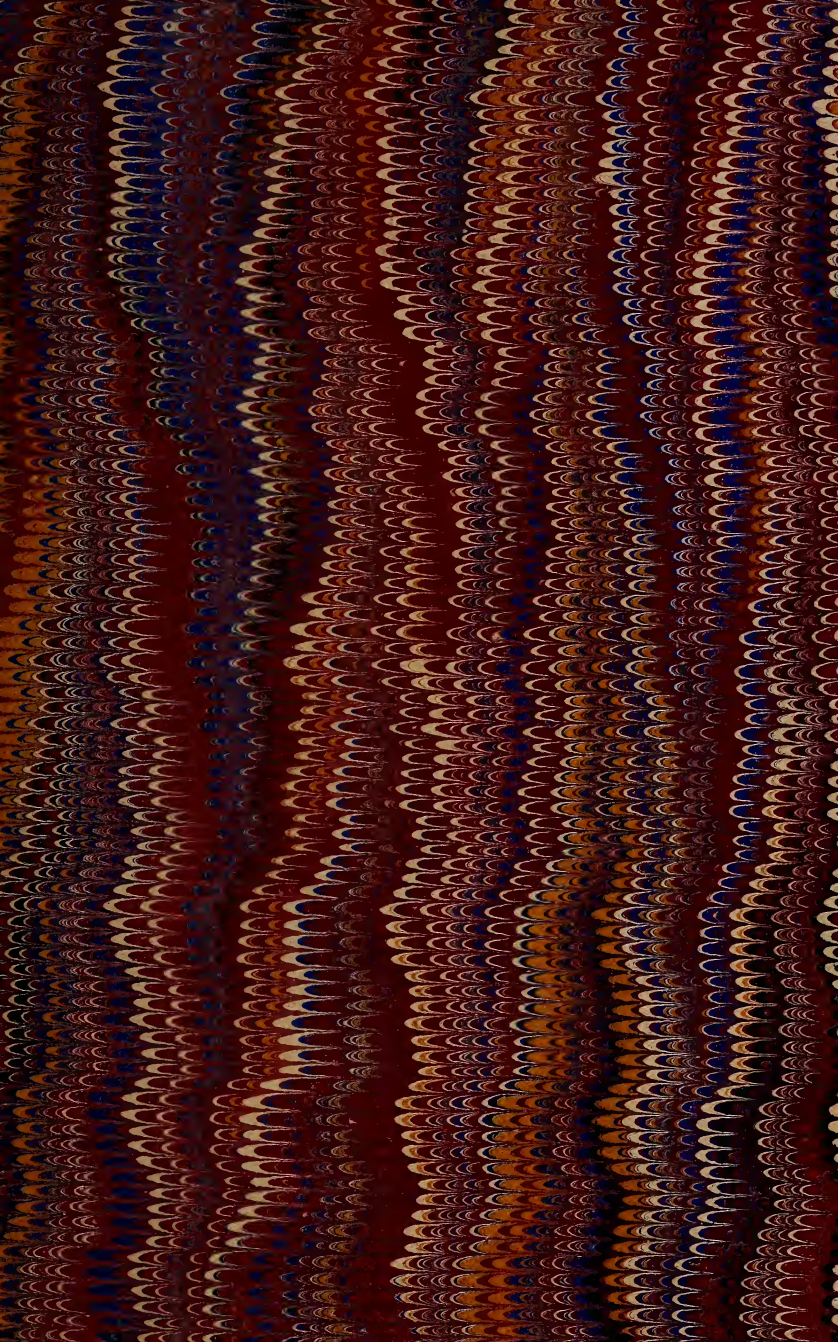












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